



Mobility Scoreboard

Higher education background report

2022/2023

Eurydice report



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CODES AND ABBREVIATIONS

Country codes

EU	European Union				EEA/EFTA and candidate countries
BE	Belgium	CY	Cyprus	AL	Albania
BE fr	Belgium – French Community	LV	Latvia	BA	Bosnia and Herzegovina
BE de	Belgium – German-speaking Community	LT	Lithuania	CH	Switzerland
BE nl	Belgium – Flemish Community	LU	Luxembourg	IS	Iceland
BG	Bulgaria	HU	Hungary	LI	Liechtenstein
CZ	Czechia	MT	Malta	ME	Montenegro
DK	Denmark	NL	Netherlands	MK	North Macedonia
DE	Germany	AT	Austria	NO	Norway
EE	Estonia	PL	Poland	RS	Serbia
IE	Ireland	PT	Portugal	TR	Türkiye
EL	Greece	RO	Romania		
ES	Spain	SI	Slovenia		
FR	France	SK	Slovakia		
HR	Croatia	FI	Finland		
IT	Italy	SE	Sweden		

Abbreviations and acronyms

ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ENIC	European Network of Information Centres in the European Region
ESG	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (European Standards and Guidelines)
HEI	Higher education institution
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
LRC	Council of Europe Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Lisbon Recognition Convention)
NARIC	National Academic Recognition Information Centres in the European Union
VET	Vocational education and training

INTRODUCTION

Experiencing transnational mobility during education and training is a major boost in the life of many young people. It helps them grow personally and academically, it broadens their social networks and develops their intercultural and language skills. Learner mobility also impacts education systems and individual educational institutions, causing them to have a more international outlook, widening their reach, and improving their overall quality.

Despite the added value that learner mobility brings and the increasing opportunities available, the path towards the free movement of students, researchers and trainees is still hampered by a number of obstacles. For example, students cannot always use their domestic grants and loans to study abroad (they are not fully portable); the recognition of qualifications and credits is not always a straightforward process; and information and guidance on studying abroad is not always readily accessible. On top of all this, students must have the necessary foreign language skills to study at tertiary level. These continuing challenges call for systemic effort to remove the barriers to learning mobility and enable more students to benefit from these learning experiences.

For these reasons, in 2011, the Council of the European Union invited ⁽¹⁾ Member States to implement structural reforms to create a positive environment to support learning mobility. The 'Youth on the move' Recommendation also serves as basis for the Mobility Scoreboard, a tool for monitoring the progress made by European countries in facilitating learning mobility. This tool examines rules and regulations that affect student mobility in higher education and initial vocational education and training.

After feasibility studies conducted both in higher education and initial vocational education and training, the Mobility Scoreboard was first published in 2016 on a joint online platform ⁽²⁾. The higher education indicators were also published in a background report (European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2016), and were further updated in 2020 (European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2020a). This is the third edition of the higher education background report, and the last one under the 2011 'Youth on the Move' Recommendation. In preparation of a new European learning mobility framework, this edition of the background report both concludes policy monitoring in the decade following the 2011 Recommendation and supports the development of indicators under a new monitoring framework.

Structure of the report

In line with the Council Recommendation, the report provides updated information on six scoreboard indicators in higher education:

1. Information and guidance
2. Foreign language preparation
3. Portability of grants and loans
4. Support for disadvantaged learners
5. Recognition of learning outcomes through the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)
6. Recognition of qualifications.

⁽¹⁾ Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on 'Youth on the move' – promoting the learning mobility of young people, OJ C199, 7.7.2011.

⁽²⁾ Mobility Scoreboard platform: <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/mobility-scoreboard>

The report has six chapters covering these higher education indicators. Each chapter is divided into three main sections. The section 'Scoreboard data' examines the various elements that make up the indicator, highlighting the different approaches taken by different education systems. Maps show the situation across Europe – revealing differences between education systems and sometimes regions as well. Charts and tables provide additional detail at a glance.

In the section that follows, the individual elements are aggregated into a composite 'scoreboard indicator'. All scoreboard indicators consist of five colour-coded categories, each containing relevant criteria or descriptors. An education system that meets all the expected criteria is allocated to the dark green category, while a system that meets none is allocated to the red category. Three additional categories: light green, yellow, and orange are used depending on the number of criteria met. For every indicator, a colour-coded map shows the situation across Europe. A colour-coded table at the end of the section presents the relevant criteria by category.

In the final section, each chapter provides an overview on the development of the scoreboard indicators over time, from 2015/2016 to 2022/2023. The three editions of the Mobility Scoreboard allow for the analysis of changes in this period based on three time points, to evaluate the overall progress made across European countries in the six policy areas. However, as two of the six indicators were redefined in 2018/2019 (scoreboard indicators 4 and 5), the analysis is more limited in these cases ⁽³⁾.

Data sources and methodology

The report is mainly based on qualitative data, gathered by the Eurydice Network, on top-level policies and measures. The qualitative information in this report was collected through a questionnaire completed by national experts and/or the national representative of the Eurydice Network. The prime sources of this information are legislation, regulations and recommendations issued by top-level education authorities. All contributors are acknowledged at the end of the report. In addition, data on public support beneficiaries comes from the Eurydice data collection on national student fee and support systems (European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2023b).

The information in this report focuses largely on tertiary education. The only exception is the chapter on language preparation, where it examines language learning provision *before* students enter higher education programmes. The other indicators generally cover all cycles of tertiary education. However, some elements, especially those related to financial support (portability, targeted support, etc.) and ECTS, have a more limited scope and concentrate primarily on the first and second cycles.

The reference year of the report is the 2022/2023 academic year ⁽⁴⁾. All 27 EU Member States are covered as well as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Türkiye.

⁽³⁾ See Chapters 4 and 5 for more details.

⁽⁴⁾ Data on public support beneficiaries is from 2021/2022 (European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2023b).

CHAPTER 1: INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE

1.1. Introduction

For the individual learner, engaging in a transnational mobility experience involves a complex decision-making and organisational process. Deciding which country and higher education institution to go to depends on a number of factors such as languages spoken, the curriculum and how it is taught. Looking further ahead, participants need to consider how the experience and learning outcomes will be recognised and valued in the national, European or international context. In addition, participants need information on very practical issues, such as what organisational steps need to be taken, how to contact the student support services at the host institution, what kinds of advice they give, what accommodation is available etc. Given the diversity of systems and environments across Europe, as well as the procedures and opportunities provided at national and institutional level, the accessibility, transparency and quality of information and guidance becomes crucial (King, Findlay and Ahrens, 2010).

It is not surprising, therefore, that information and guidance on learning mobility is one of the pillars of the Council Recommendation on this issue ⁽¹⁾. Member States are recommended to make information easily accessible and tailored to the needs of specific groups of learners and individuals. Maximising the involvement of existing networks as well as exploring new, creative and interactive ways to disseminate, communicate and exchange information with young people and all other stakeholders are also encouraged ⁽²⁾.

The Council Recommendation also recognises the positive role of multipliers in enhancing the accessibility of information, as well as the value of peer-to-peer guidance. Member States are advised to use 'teachers, trainers, families, youth workers and young people' who have participated in learning mobility experiences to inspire and motivate young people to do likewise ⁽³⁾.

Taking into account the spirit of the recommendation and the specific measures proposed, Scoreboard indicator 1 examines the extent to which top-level authorities have taken steps to deliver accessible, transparent and tailored information and guidance on learning mobility opportunities.

1.2. Scoreboard data

The analysis that follows focuses on four key aspects related to the recommendation. It examines whether, with respect to information and guidance to students on outward learning mobility:

1. a strategic approach towards information and guidance has been adopted by top-level authorities;
2. central web portals have been set up that specifically deal with information and guidance;
3. personalised services are being delivered, evaluated and monitored;
4. multipliers are being involved in publicly funded large-scale initiatives.

All four items focus exclusively on outward mobility, assessing support in this area to mobile and potentially mobile students.

⁽¹⁾ Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on 'Youth on the move' – promoting the learning mobility of young people, OJ C199, 7.7.2011, C199/4.

⁽²⁾ Ibid.

⁽³⁾ Ibid.

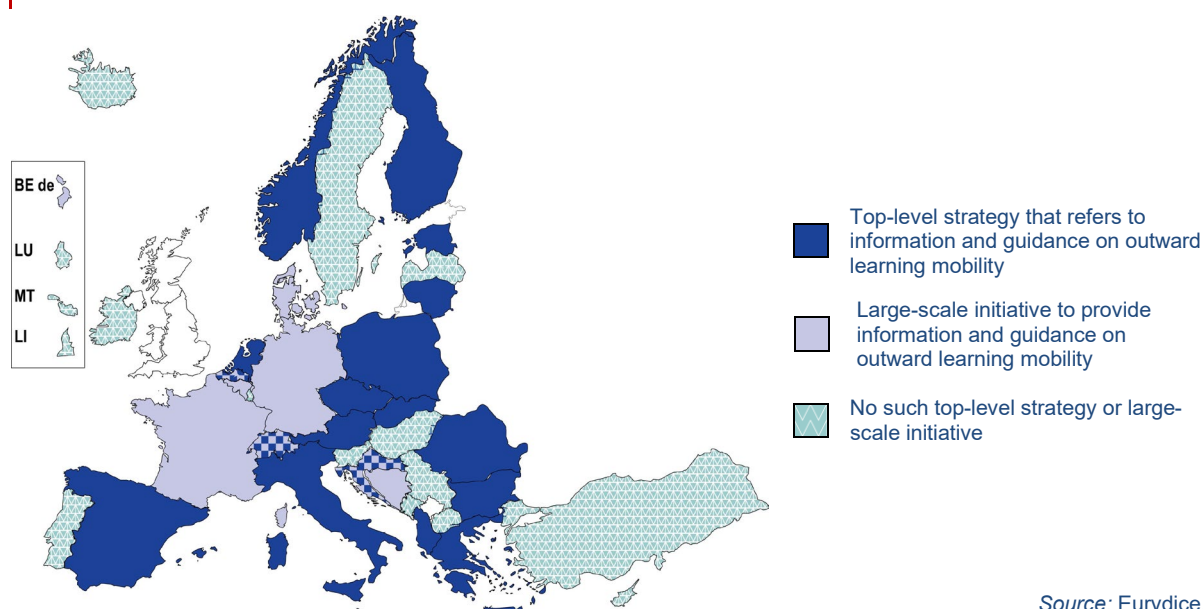
Strategies, large-scale initiatives and delegated bodies

Top-level authorities may take different approaches to planning and delivering a coherent set of policies that specifically focus on facilitating students' access to information on outward learning mobility. In some cases, they issue strategic policy documents that include objectives related to information and guidance, signalling the political importance of the matter at this level. A second approach is to implement large-scale initiatives either at national or regional level. Examples of these large-scale initiatives might be major publicity campaigns or the setting up of national/regional information networks. The third approach is where top-level authorities delegate the responsibility for the planning and delivery of services in this area to a specific body. Whatever the option chosen, the ultimate aim is generally to ensure that appropriate information and guidance is made available to students so that they can make informed choices before, during and after their transnational learning mobility experience. This section examines all three options.

Strategies and large-scale initiatives

Figure 1.1 provides an overview of the education systems that have either adopted top-level strategies covering information and guidance or developed large-scale initiatives in this area. Top-level strategies are understood as official documents developed by the top-level authorities in an effort to achieve an overall goal. The strategies may comprise a vision, identify objectives, name responsible bodies and indicate the funding resources available – they do not necessarily specify what practical measures are to be taken. Initiatives, on the other hand, are intended to implement practical measures identified as necessary by top-level authorities. In some cases, initiatives are a means by which elements of a strategy are implemented.

Figure 1.1: Existence of top-level strategies and large-scale initiatives that refer to information and guidance on outward learning mobility, 2022/2023



Most countries have top-level strategies that provide strategic direction for policies related to outward learning mobility. However, information and guidance for students is usually a minor aspect of these strategies, or in some cases it is not covered at all. As Figure 1.1 shows, 18 of the education systems participating in this report have a top-level strategy that makes explicit reference to information and guidance for students in the area of outward learning mobility. Five education systems have no top-level strategies, but they have instead other comparable large-scale initiatives, while three (Belgium –

Flemish Community, Croatia and Switzerland) have both. Still, as many as 15 education systems have neither a strategy nor other large-scale initiatives dealing with information and guidance on outward student mobility. This number may appear high, but it should be borne in mind not only that it represents fewer than half of the education systems examined here, but also that there has been substantial improvement. Compared to 2018/2019 (the previous data collection point), when only eight education systems had a top-level strategy and 24 had neither a strategy nor other large-scale initiatives (European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2020a), the change over these four years is remarkable.

In terms of outlook of the top-level strategies, the results differ. Some countries have a broader strategy on education where information about outgoing mobility is also covered, others have a strategy on the internationalisation of higher education, while others have an even more specific strategy focusing on student mobility. Only three education systems (Belgium – German-speaking Community, Switzerland and Norway) fall in the latter category, while in most cases outgoing mobility guidance and information is covered either in higher education internationalisation strategies (Belgium – Flemish Community, Austria, Czechia, Italy, Spain, Lithuania, Netherlands, Slovakia, Finland and Albania) or as part of a broader education strategy (Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Croatia, Poland, Romania and Slovakia).

As already noted, since 2018/2019, eight education systems have introduced top-level strategies dealing mainly or in part with guidance and information on outgoing mobility. Three of them, namely Lithuania, Finland and Albania, developed mobility guidance in a higher education internationalisation strategy. The remaining five (Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Croatia and Romania), integrated it in a broader education strategy.

Delegation of information and guidance to external bodies

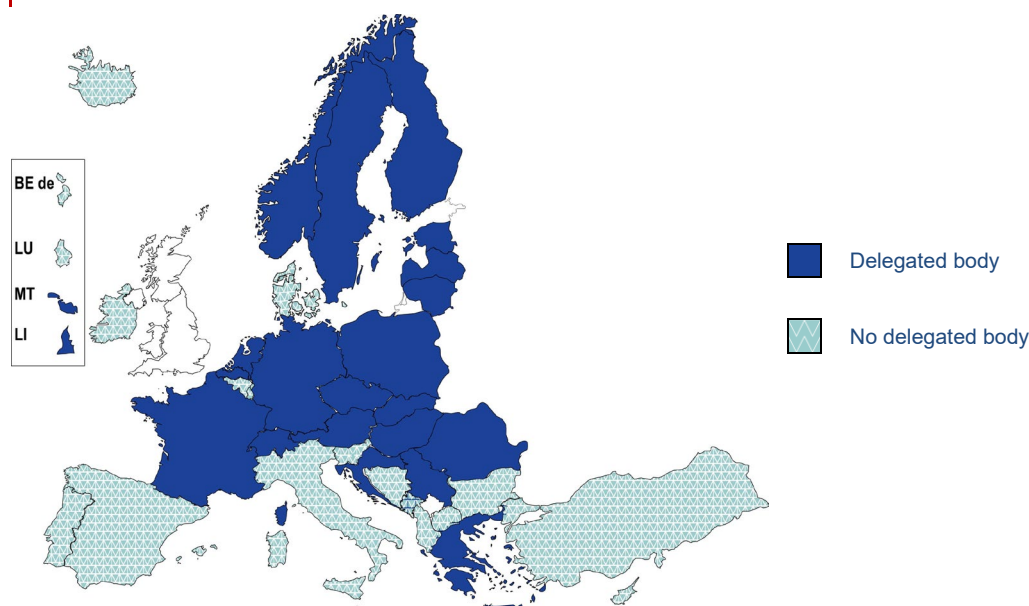
Many countries delegate the provision of information and guidance on outward learning mobility to a central, yet external and independent body.

All countries have a national agency entrusted with the management of programmes such as Erasmus+ or other European funded initiatives. Such agencies are excluded from this analysis when:

- their main focus is the management of these programmes,
- the information they provide is partial (e.g. limited to the European Union funding that is available),
- the information is predominantly directed at organisations rather than individuals,
- the guidance element to students is missing,
- their role is limited to incoming students.

As shown in Figure 1.2, 22 education systems have a delegated body that provides information and guidance to students on outward learning mobility, although their mandate is always broader than this specific area. In Belgium (Flemish Community), Czechia, the Netherlands, Finland and Liechtenstein, the delegated body has a key role in implementing or coordinating policy on internationalisation in higher education. In Estonia, Greece, Romania and Finland, this body also manages various types of scholarships to support studies in the home country and abroad. In France, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Austria, Switzerland, Norway and Serbia, the delegated body manages European and/or worldwide learning mobility schemes, and their student information and guidance duties have evolved mainly in this context.

Figure 1.2: Existence of a delegated body responsible for providing information and guidance services for individuals on outward learning mobility, 2022/2023



Source: Eurydice.

Only two countries have reported changes since the last report was published. In Estonia, the external bodies responsible for providing information and guidance on outward mobility are now the Education and Youth Board, Office of Scholarships and Grants ⁽⁴⁾ and the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Agency ⁽⁵⁾. Norway's previous body was merged with other public entities to become the Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills ⁽⁶⁾, an external agency of the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research.

Web portals

The use of the internet as a key route for providing information and guidance to learners is explicitly mentioned in the Council Recommendation. The availability of information on the internet, however, does not inevitably mean that it is more accessible, clearer, or more comprehensive. For example, information might be dispersed across higher education institutions' websites and might not be easily located, or it might be directed at organisations rather than individuals and/or limited to European Union initiatives. Furthermore, the approach and content may vary depending on the policy of the individual institution. For example, the information provided may only be of a very general nature, limited to descriptions of education systems, costs of living in other countries, listings of higher education institutions, etc.

Consequently, as there is a wealth of information on learning mobility available on the Internet, it has been necessary to establish several qualifying factors for this indicator. Web portals must:

- be mainly dedicated to learning mobility with specific information on outward mobility;
- provide information on the opportunities available (including but not limited to European programmes). They must cover the countries where mobility opportunities are available, duration, eligibility of candidates, level of studies, etc.
- offer guidance on the application process and contact points for further information;

⁽⁴⁾ See: <https://harno.ee/opirande-stipendiumid>

⁽⁵⁾ See: <https://eeagentuur.ee/>.

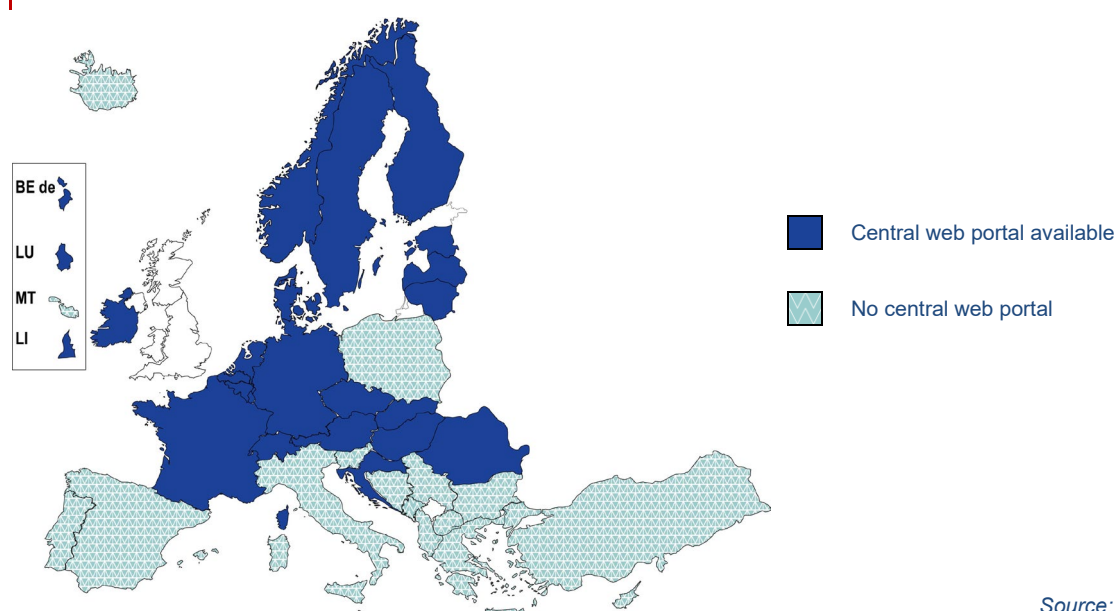
⁽⁶⁾ See: <https://hkdir.no/norwegian-directorate-for-higher-education-and-skills>.

- provide a central point where all the essential information can be obtained, thereby avoiding the need for end-users to browse through other websites to understand what is available to them.

Portals may also provide additional information, specifically tailored for potential applicants, for example, on accommodation available, recognition of credits and qualifications, language courses, etc. in the destination country. Although this information raises the quality of the information and guidance, it is not considered a requirement for the indicator.

Figure 1.3 shows that central web portals meeting the above criteria are available in 23 European education systems. Thanks to Belgium (French Community) the number has increased by one since 2018/2019.

Figure 1.3: Existence of a central web portal providing key information and guidance on outward learning mobility, 2022/2023



Source: Eurydice.

Therefore, in terms of number of central web portals, there is stability over time. It also means that about half of the education systems still do not have a portal collating all key information regarding outward learning mobility. The minor changes since 2018/2019 concern Belgium (French Community) and Estonia whose web portals have a new internet address ⁽⁷⁾.

Provision, monitoring and evaluation of personalised services

The Council Recommendation also explicitly calls for encouraging the provision of guidance to learners on two topics: firstly, how to make the best use of learning mobility opportunities to develop knowledge, skills and competences and benefit from the competences acquired abroad; and secondly, providing help to learners with reintegration after a long stay abroad.

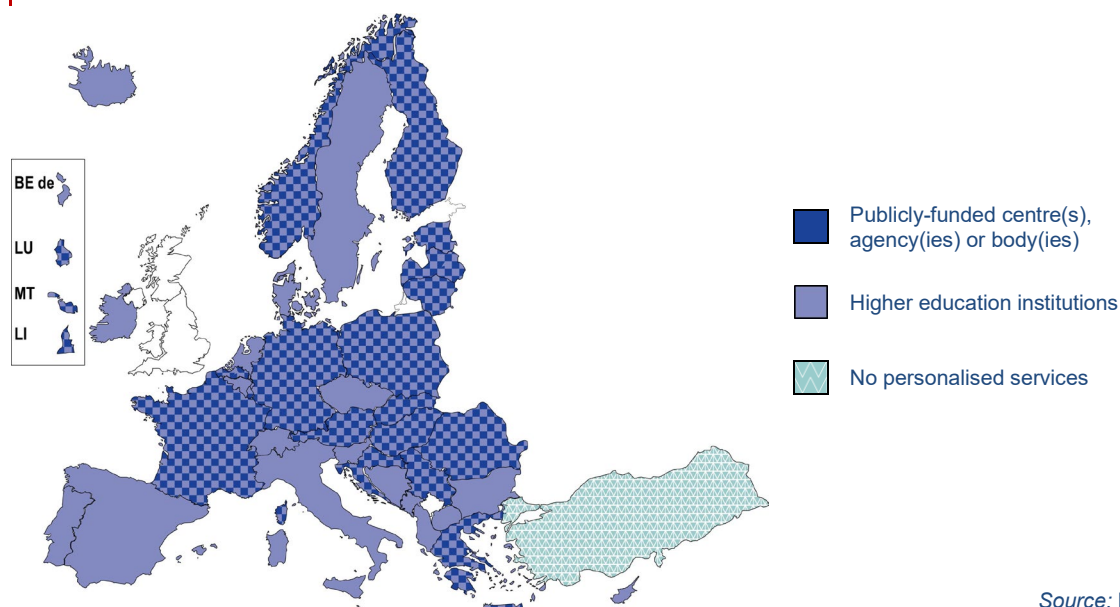
As young people have very different personal circumstances, including different socio-economic conditions, additional needs, disabilities, or family contexts, they often need personalised advice and practical support. Such services can be provided through counselling from professional staff both face-

⁽⁷⁾ Belgium (French Community): <https://aides-etudes.cfwb.be/aides/aides-financieres-et-avantages/aides-a-la-mobilite-internationale/>. Estonia: <https://harno.ee/opirande-stipendiumid>. For the websites of other European education systems, see European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice (2020a).

to-face and online. These services can cover a range of areas from help in navigating administrative procedures and managing finances, to individual guidance for students with disabilities.

All education systems, except Türkiye, provide personalised services to their students (Figure 1.4).

Figure 1.4: Provision of personalised services to learners for outward mobility, by type of institution, 2022/2023



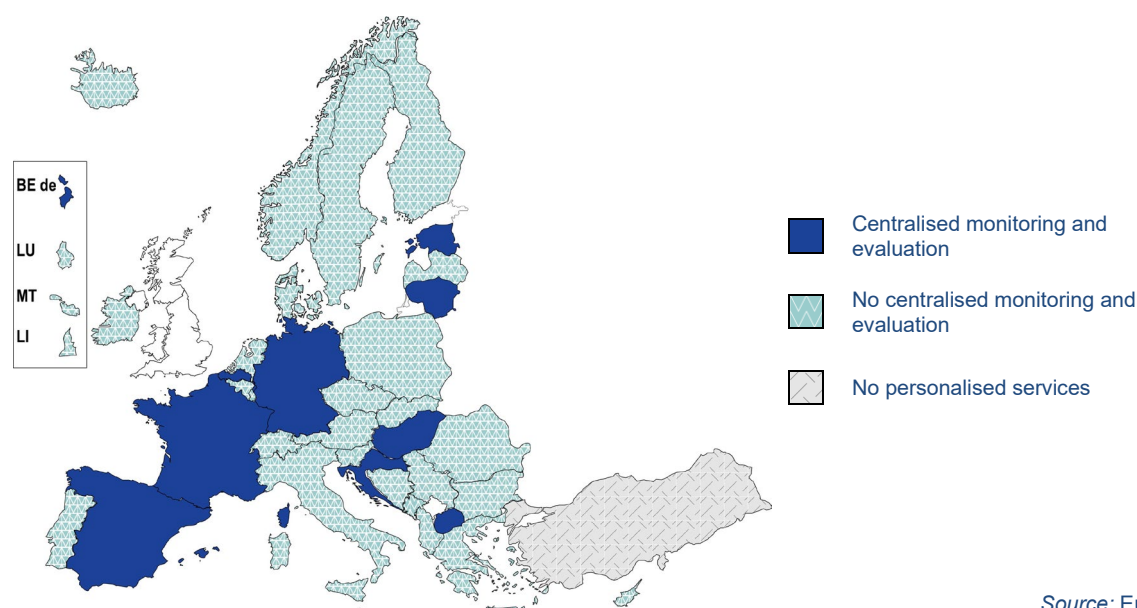
Source: Eurydice.

In general, the international offices of higher education institutions provide these services. In addition, in 19 education systems, one or more publicly funded centres or agencies are also mandated to provide personalised support to individual students.

Delegating the provision of personalised services to higher education institutions ensures that the service is close to the user and the service provider is more likely to understand learners' needs. However, this approach may result in a fragmented service leading to unevenness in provision and variable quality standards – better-resourced institutions may offer better services to their students.

This potential risk could be avoided by centralised, regular monitoring and evaluation of the services offered to learners. Figure 1.5 shows that despite the widespread provision of personalised services in higher education institutions, the quality of these services is monitored systematically in only ten education systems. Progress in this area is somewhat slow. Since the academic year 2018/2019 just one education system (North Macedonia) joined the others (Belgium – German-speaking and Flemish Communities, Germany, Estonia, Spain, France, Croatia, Lithuania and Hungary) that already had a centralised monitoring and evaluation system. In Finland, centralised monitoring and evaluation existed during the previous round of data collection, but for the time being has ceased to operate.

Figure 1.5: Centralised monitoring and evaluation of personalised services that cover learning mobility issues, 2022/2023



Source: Eurydice.

Two main approaches to the monitoring and evaluation of personalised services can be observed across Europe. In Belgium (Flemish and German-speaking Communities), Spain, France and Croatia this task is performed by external quality assurance agencies, which audit the quality of higher education institutions and/or programmes and have specific indicators for the quality of personalised services. In Germany, Estonia and Hungary, the delegated body (see Figure 1.2) monitors the quality of their own personalised services and sometimes those offered by higher education institutions. They typically run online satisfaction surveys among students who have participated or are preparing to participate in outward learning mobility experiences and have used these services.

In 2022, North Macedonia's National Council for Higher Education and Research adopted a 'Rulebook for the standards and the procedures for the external evaluation and self-evaluation' of higher education institutions. Since in North Macedonia the services for outward mobility are offered by the higher education institutions themselves (see Figure 1.4), this rulebook prompts them to monitor if and to what extent students show an interest in outgoing mobility, and allows the country's quality assurance agency to collect information about the practices related to student mobility and their assessment.

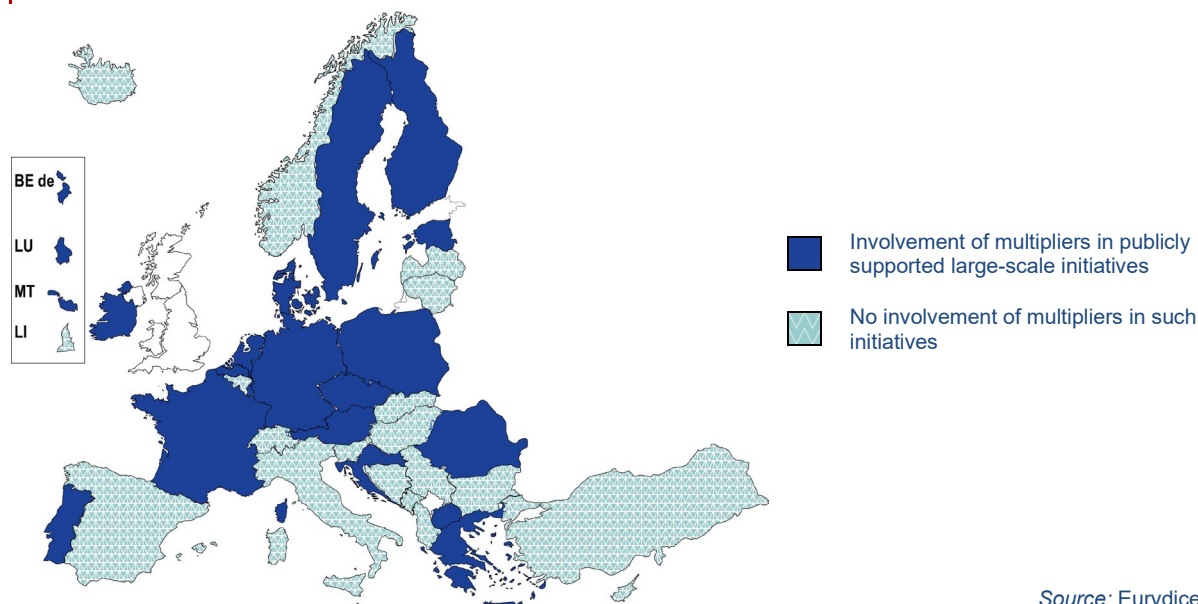
Involvement of multipliers

The role of multipliers – defined here as individuals who have had learning experiences abroad or who have been indirectly involved in the process (teachers, families, etc.) – is central to the development of a learning mobility culture. The influence of peers and role models with indirect experience of learning mobility can motivate students to embark on this experience.

Despite their strong potential, however, only about half of the education systems use multipliers in publicly supported large-scale initiatives (see Figure 1.6). Specifically, 20 education systems do whereas 19 do not. It is interesting to note that although the total numbers have not changed since 2018/2019, the distribution of the education systems has. In other words, between 2018/2019 and 2022/2023 two education systems (Lithuania and Hungary) stopped operating publicly supported

large-scale schemes where multipliers were involved in the promotion of student mobility, while another two (Estonia and Greece) started doing so.

Figure 1.6: Involvement of multipliers in publicly supported large-scale initiatives, 2022/2023



Source: Eurydice.

Multipliers are also increasingly present in online promotional material. Their testimonials are published on centralised web portals in the form of reports, videos, blogs and articles. They also share their experiences on the social media platforms of public bodies. For example, in Denmark, Greece, Malta and Finland, videos are posted on centralised web portals and on social media in which students who formerly participated in learning mobility, teachers and celebrities share their experiences.

It is interesting to note that countries mainly report on involving multipliers in the context of the promotion of Erasmus+ learning mobility, and most countries rely on former students to share their experiences. While peers may have the most important influence on students who are considering undertaking learning mobility experiences, those indirectly involved, such as teachers and families, are also sources of influence that could be harnessed to support large-scale public initiatives.

1.3. Scoreboard indicator

Information and guidance on outward learning mobility is crucial in preparing students to engage in and to gain most benefit from their learning mobility experience. It is also an important factor for inclusion, because information is key to providing better access to learning mobility for all students. Scoreboard indicator 1 (Figure 1.7) summarises the data presented in Figures 1.1. to 1.6. It takes into account whether education systems have in place the four elements related to the pillar in the Council Recommendation on information and guidance to students with respect to outward mobility:

1. an overarching strategy issued by the top-level authority that sets the direction for the provision of information and guidance, or publicly supported large-scale initiatives aimed at informing and guiding learners, or a delegated body that has a mandate to provide information and guidance to learners (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2);
2. a centralised publicly supported web portal largely devoted to learning mobility, but with a focus on outward mobility (see Figure 1.3);

3. personalised services, from HEIs or other publicly supported institutions, providing counselling, guidance and information, with established mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation (see Figures 1.4 and 1.5);
4. multipliers involved in publicly supported large-scale initiatives for information and guidance on learning mobility (see Figure 1.6).

The scoreboard indicator is built on a five-category, colour-coded scheme where dark green indicates that all four elements are in place, and red signifies that none are present. The remaining three categories (light green, yellow and orange) indicate that one or more elements are missing.

Overall, Scoreboard 1 reveals a mixed picture. While a handful of countries meet all the criteria of Scoreboard 1, and a few more fail to meet only one, the majority do not fulfil three or more criteria. Specifically, 6 education systems fall in the dark green category (i.e., they meet all the criteria), 9 in the light green (i.e., three criteria), 13 in the yellow (i.e., two criteria) and 6 in the orange (i.e., one criterion) and, finally, 5 in the red category (no criteria met). Thus, in terms of information and guidance on learning mobility, there is still plenty of room for improvement in Europe.

The breakdown below offers some detail.

Dark green: Belgium (German-speaking and Flemish Communities), Germany, Estonia, France and Croatia comply with all the criteria.

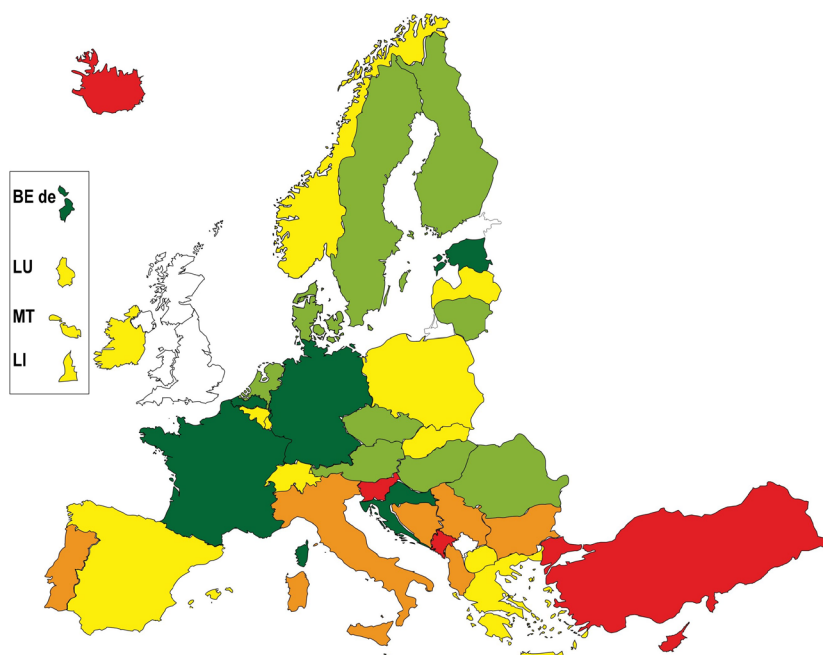
Light green: Nine education systems fall under this category. These education systems (Czechia, Denmark, Lithuania, Hungary, the Netherlands, Austria, Romania, Finland and Sweden) fulfil three of the four criteria. The most commonly lacking criterion is having a central monitoring and evaluation system of personalised services on outward mobility.

Yellow: This is the most populous category. Thirteen education systems (Belgium – French Community, Ireland, Greece, Spain, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, North Macedonia and Norway) fulfil two of the four criteria. Different countries meet different criteria, but what these countries (except for Spain and North Macedonia) have in common, is that they do not have a centralised system for the evaluation of personalised services to students.

Orange: Six education systems (Bulgaria, Italy, Portugal, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia) fulfil only one criterion. Usually, that is having a top-level strategy that addresses information and guidance on outward mobility.

Red: Cyprus, Slovenia, Iceland, Montenegro and Türkiye do not meet any of the Scoreboard 1 criteria.

Figure 1.7: Scoreboard indicator 1: Information and guidance on outward learning mobility, 2022/2023



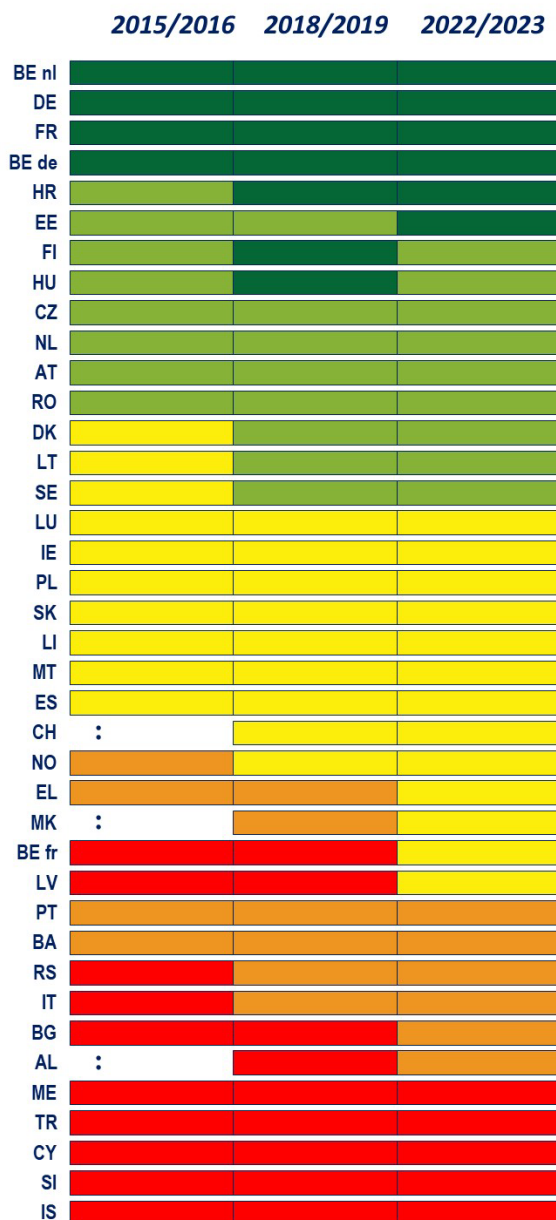
Source: Eurydice.

Scoreboard indicator categories:

	All four of the following elements regarding information and guidance on learning mobility are in place: - an overarching strategy on mobility issued by the central level authority that sets the direction for the provision of information and guidance, OR - publicly supported large-scale initiatives aimed at informing and guiding learners, OR - a delegated body that has a mandate to provide information and guidance to learners; - a centralised publicly supported web portal devoted to learning mobility, but with a focus on outward mobility; - personalised services, from HEIs or other publicly supported institutions, providing counselling, guidance and information, with established mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation; - involvement of multipliers under publicly supported large-scale initiatives of information and guidance on learning mobility.
	Three of the four elements are in place.
	Two of the four elements are in place.
	One of the four elements is in place.
	None of the four elements is in place.

1.4. The development of the scoreboard indicator over time

Figure 1.8: Scoreboard indicator 1: Changes over time, 2015/2016, 2018/2019 and 2022/2023



Source: Eurydice.

: Did not participate in data collection

Explanatory notes

Education systems are primarily sorted according to the colour-coded categories in 2022/2023. See Figure 1.7 for the definition of categories.

The 2022/2023 Mobility Scoreboard report marks the third data collection on education system features relating to cross-border student mobility. The existence of three nearly equidistant data collection points (academic year 2015/2016, 2018/2019 and 2022/2023) allows us for the first time to track changes over time. This feature is useful for anyone wishing to assess if and how an education system is progressing in terms of providing favourable conditions for supporting learner mobility.

Rather than looking at the development of each systemic feature (i.e. figure) separately and risking getting lost in the detail, the current section, and all concluding sections of the subsequent chapters, looks at the development of the scoreboard over time.

Using the scoreboard colour scheme (see Figure 1.7), Figure 1.8 shows in which category each education system falls since the academic year 2015/2016. Thus, any colour changes over time help the reader to determine if more or fewer of the conditions on student mobility information and guidance are met over the years. Education systems are ranked from highest to lowest score using 2022/2023 as a reference point.

Given the national governments' commitment to the 2011 Council Recommendation ⁽⁸⁾, one would expect that the scoreboard map figure would be turning greener over time. In other words, the hypothesis is that if any of the scoreboard elements (i.e., a strategy on information and guidance, an appropriate web portal, monitored personalised services and the engagement of multipliers) was missing it would be provided later on. As Figure 1.8 shows, the hypothesis is at best marginally correct. There is indeed some improvement over time, but it is rather slow.

⁽⁸⁾ Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on 'Youth on the move' – promoting the learning mobility of young people, OJ C199, 7.7.2011.

Compared to the previous data collection round (2018/2019), the number of education systems fulfilling all the Scoreboard indicator 1 criteria – shown in green in Figure 1.8 – has decreased by one, while compared to the first data collection (2015/2016), it has increased by two. At the other end, the number of education systems that fulfil none of the criteria has been dropping consistently. In 2015/2016, there were ten education systems; in 2018/2019 nine; and currently just five. This means that there are now more education systems than before that fulfil at least some of the Scoreboard indicator 1 criteria.

In particular, there are now a few more education systems that fulfil one criterion (six education systems now and in 2018/2019, as opposed to four in 2015/2016) or two criteria (thirteen education systems now, compared to in 2018/2019 and 2015/2016). The number of education systems that meet three criteria has remained virtually unchanged (nine today, seven in 2018/2019 and eight in 2015/2016).

Combining the number of education systems in the dark and light green (four or three criteria are met), on the one hand, and in the orange and yellow categories (one or two criteria are met), on the other, helps us see clearer that progress has been slow. For the green categories, the number grew from 12 in 2015/2016, to 14 in 2018/2019 and 15 in 2022/2023. For the lower categories, the number rose from 14, to 15 and 19 in the same periods.

Thus, in terms of guidance and information for outward learner mobility, we observe a kind of stagnation in the number of education systems meeting all or nearly all criteria. Any progress is limited and concerns mainly the number of countries meeting no or only few criteria.

Figure 1.8 reveals three more things. First, the red, orange and yellow categories have always been, and continue to be, the more populated. In plain terms, only a minority of education systems (currently 15 out of 39) meet most or all of the information and guidance benchmarks. Second, any progress tends to be gradual in the sense that jumping categories is rare. As Figure 1.8. shows, with the exception of Belgium (French Community) and Latvia, all changes are from one colour category to the next. In a similar vein, change tends to be unidirectional and usually upwards. However, in the case of Finland and Hungary there was a small regress from the dark green to the light green category. This is likely to be a temporary. In the case of Hungary, the previous strategy expired and has not been replaced by a new yet, while in Finland the monitoring and evaluation system for personalised student services is itself currently under evaluation.

In conclusion, progress over the years in information and guidance has been relatively slow and limited. Consequently, there is still plenty of scope for improvement in the future.

CHAPTER 2: FOREIGN LANGUAGE PREPARATION

2.1. Introduction

Learning languages is fundamental to transnational mobility experiences. The Council Recommendation ‘Youth on the move’ emphasises the importance of language learning ‘starting at early stages of education’ and urges Member States to provide ‘quality linguistic and cultural preparation for mobility in both general and vocational education’ ⁽¹⁾. Alongside foreign language skills, the Recommendation also draws attention to other useful skills and competences, including ‘basic digital competences’ ⁽²⁾. Acquiring these skills not only allows students to be well prepared for their learning experience abroad, but also enables them to ‘take advantage of new opportunities for virtual mobility, which complement physical mobility’ ⁽³⁾. However, while digital skills certainly play a role in preparing students for learning mobility, foreign language skills remain fundamental to the process. Scoreboard indicator 2 therefore focuses exclusively on foreign language preparation, emphasising its crucial role in equipping students with the skills necessary to gain the most benefit from their study period abroad.

2.2. Scoreboard data

This section examines the data on which Scoreboard indicator 2 is based. It looks at national approaches to compulsory foreign language learning in schools, from pre-primary level to the end of upper secondary education. More specifically, it focuses on the *duration* of compulsory foreign language learning available to all pupils in full-time education, including both general and vocational education.

The focus of the indicator is closely linked to the conclusions of the 2002 Barcelona European Council ⁽⁴⁾, which called for action ‘to improve the mastery of basic skills, in particular by teaching at least two foreign languages from a very early age’. This goal is based on the premise that it is desirable for all pupils to spend as long as possible learning foreign languages. Though many factors influence language proficiency (teaching methods, teachers’ and pupils’ motivation, pupils’ socio-economic background, availability of informal language learning opportunities etc.), the evidence suggests that starting to learn foreign languages at an early age, as well as learning more than one foreign language are factors associated with higher levels of language proficiency (European Commission, 2012, p. 11).

For these reasons, this chapter examines the total number of years during which all pupils must learn:

- at least one compulsory foreign language, and
- at least two different foreign languages simultaneously.

The total period of compulsory foreign language learning is calculated from the beginning of pre-primary education until the end of upper secondary education. In some countries, this coincides with the required minimum length of compulsory education/training, while in most this period includes some additional years ⁽⁵⁾. Two caveats should be noted in this respect. First, in most European countries, all

⁽¹⁾ Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on ‘Youth on the move’ – promoting the learning mobility of young people, OJ C199, 7.7.2011, C199/3.

⁽²⁾ Ibid.

⁽³⁾ Ibid.

⁽⁴⁾ Barcelona European Council 15-16 March 2002, Presidency Conclusions, p. 19.

⁽⁵⁾ Please consult the fact sheet [Compulsory education in Europe – 2022/2023](#) (European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2022a) for the exact duration of compulsory education.

or almost all children attend at least some years of pre-primary education – even when it is not compulsory. Foreign language learning in non-compulsory pre-primary education is considered in the scoreboard when two conditions are met: a) all participating pupils have to learn a foreign language; b) educational authorities have committed themselves to guaranteeing a place in a pre-primary setting for all children whose parents request it ⁽⁶⁾. Second, in most countries, upper secondary education goes beyond the end of compulsory education. In these cases, foreign language learning is nevertheless regarded as ‘compulsory’ if it is required for all participating pupils.

Since the focus of the scoreboard is on outward mobility in higher education, the indicator concentrates only on educational pathways or tracks *giving direct access to higher education*. Specifically, it examines the minimum requirements on language learning in:

- general education up to the end of upper secondary level, and
- upper secondary vocational programmes allowing direct access to higher education ⁽⁷⁾.

In vocational education, the indicator is based on information on the most representative programmes. This means that programmes or pathways delivered in institutions dedicated to very specific fields (e.g. fine arts and performing arts) are not considered. Nor are adult education programmes, programmes falling under special needs education, or pathways with a very small number of pupils.

Total length of compulsory foreign language teaching in general education

The first important factor to be considered is the total time spent learning foreign languages. This section therefore examines the total number of years of compulsory foreign language teaching from pre-primary to upper secondary level, in the context of general education.

The analysis focuses on the minimum requirements established by education authorities. This means the minimum period of compulsory language learning for all pupils, although some pupils might learn foreign languages for a longer period of time, for example in language or humanities oriented upper secondary tracks.

It is important to note that, when comparing countries, teaching languages for the same number of years does not necessarily mean having the same exposure to foreign languages, as teaching hours can vary widely (see European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2021). Moreover, pupils may not learn the same language during the whole period of compulsory foreign language learning: they can choose to study multiple foreign languages for shorter periods of time. Nevertheless, the total number of years of compulsory foreign language teaching is a good proxy for assessing how early language learning begins in European countries and, to some extent, the degree of continuity in its teaching.

Typically, pupils in general education tracks in Europe have to learn one foreign language for 10 to 12 years. As Figure 2.1 shows, this is the case in 24 countries. Learning foreign languages is compulsory for a longer period in nine education systems: for 16 years in Luxembourg and Poland ⁽⁸⁾, for 15 years in Belgium (German-speaking Community), 14 years in Greece and for 13 years in Italy, Cyprus, Romania, Montenegro and North Macedonia.

⁽⁶⁾ For more details on this guarantee and its starting age across Europe, see [Structural indicators for monitoring education and training systems in Europe](#) project (European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2022b).

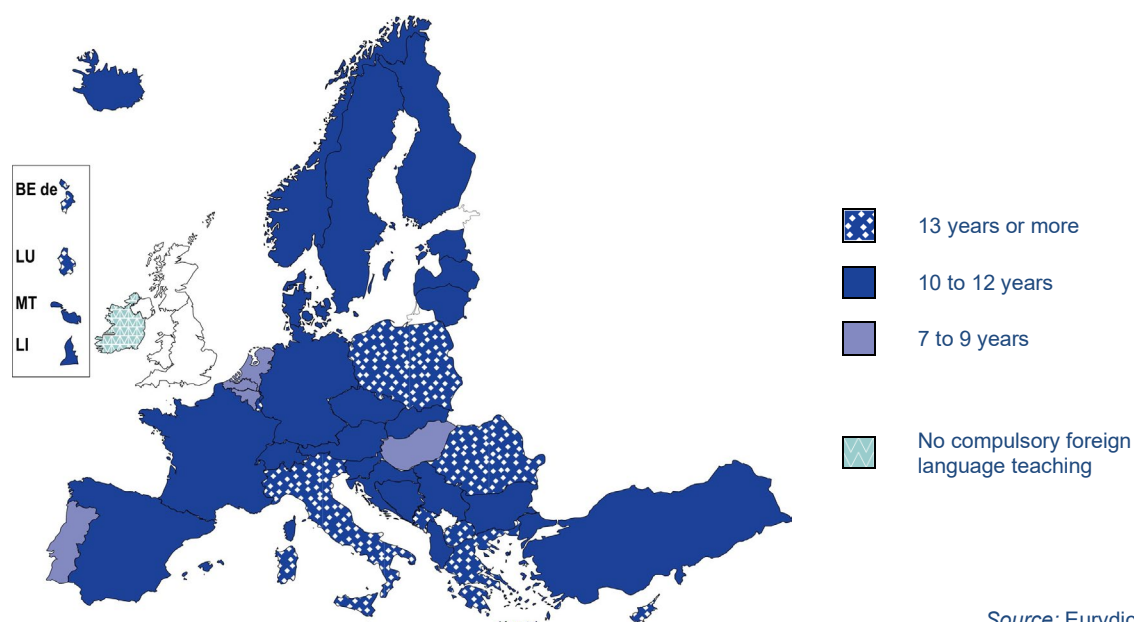
⁽⁷⁾ Typically, these programmes have the ISCED-P code ‘354’. See the International Standard Classification of Education ISCED 2011 for more details (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012).

⁽⁸⁾ In both Luxembourg and Poland, all children participating in non-compulsory pre-primary education start learning a foreign language from the age of 3. While compulsory education starts in these two countries at the age of 4 and 6 respectively, a place in publicly subsidised pre-primary settings is guaranteed from the age of 3 (see European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2022b, p. 10). Thus, for these two countries, the age of 3 years is considered as the starting age of compulsory foreign language learning for all pupils.

Compulsory foreign language teaching lasts between 7 and 9 years in five education systems. All students learn one foreign language for 7 years in the Netherlands, 8 years in Belgium (French and Flemish Communities) and 9 years in Hungary and Portugal. There is no compulsory foreign language teaching in Ireland – as neither Irish nor English are considered as foreign languages.

Most commonly, compulsory foreign language learning starts at the first grade of primary education. In five European education systems, foreign language learning is mandatory from an earlier age, in pre-primary education. All children who attend pre-primary education start learning a foreign language from the age of 3 in Belgium (German-speaking Community), Luxembourg and Poland – this is one, two or even three years earlier than compulsory education begins. Recently, learning a foreign language has become obligatory for those children who have reached compulsory pre-primary education age in Greece (from 4 years) and Cyprus (from 4 years and 8 months).

Figure 2.1: Total length of compulsory foreign language teaching in general education (ISCED 0 to 3), 2022/2023



Source: Eurydice.

Country-specific notes

Belgium (BE fr): In the Region of Brussels-Capital and in the Walloon Communes with specific language status, pupils must start learning the first foreign language as a compulsory subject from age 8. Therefore, the total length of compulsory foreign language teaching is 10 years (in contrast to 8 years in other parts of the French Community of Belgium). From 2023/2024, all pupils will have to learn a first foreign language from the age of 8, see [circulaire 8624 du 10 juin 2022](#).

Germany: In some *Länder*, compulsory foreign language teaching starts at the age of 6 bringing the total length to 13 years.

Estonia, Sweden and Iceland: Schools can decide when to start foreign language teaching between the ages of 7 and 9. The figure is calculated on the latest possible starting age.

Spain: The figure presents the most widespread situation across the country. Since 2006, Autonomous Communities can decide to make the learning of a foreign language compulsory for children attending pre-primary education. National regulations encourage the education authorities of Autonomous Communities to promote foreign language learning in pre-primary education, especially in the final year (from age 5). See Article 14.5 of [Law 2/2006](#) on Education (LOE), amended by Law 3/2020 (LOMLOE).

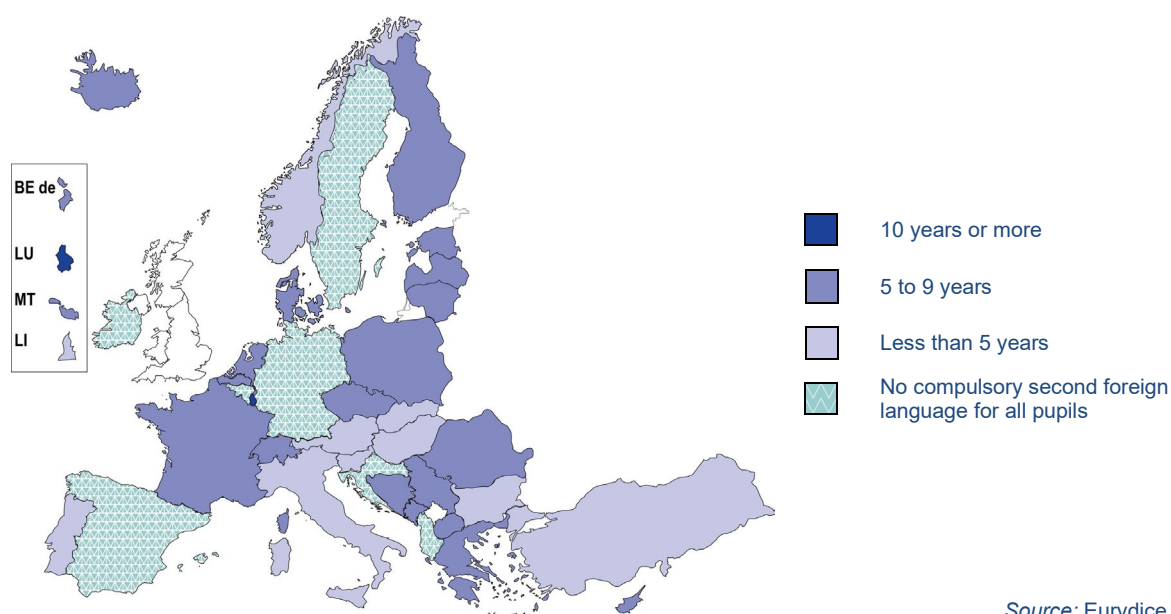
Netherlands: It is compulsory to learn a foreign language during primary education. In practice, this generally occurs around age 10, but schools can organise this provision at an earlier stage.

Length of period with at least two compulsory foreign languages in general education

Most education systems in Europe require all pupils in general education tracks to learn two or more foreign languages simultaneously. Figure 2.2 shows that usually this obligation is set between 5 to 10 years. Luxembourg stands out, as pupils in general education have to learn at least two foreign languages simultaneously for 13 years. In Latvia, this is required for 9 years. Pupils learn two foreign languages for 8 years in Romania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Switzerland, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia.

In contrast, learning two foreign languages simultaneously is not compulsory for all pupils in general education in eight education systems: Belgium (French Community), Germany, Ireland, Spain, Croatia, Sweden and Albania. Pupils are required to learn at least two or more foreign languages for a short period of time (less than five years) in 10 European countries and some Autonomous Communities in Spain. For example, in Norway all students in general education tracks are obliged to learn two languages for one year. This requirement is set to 3 years in Italy, Portugal, and Liechtenstein.

Figure 2.2: Length of period with at least two compulsory foreign languages in general education (ISCED 1 to 3), 2022/2023



Source: Eurydice.

Country-specific notes

Belgium (BE fr): From 2027/2028, learning a second foreign language will be compulsory for all general secondary education students aged 14 to 18 years.

Estonia and Iceland: Schools can decide when to start teaching a second foreign language between the ages of 10 and 12. The figure is calculated on the latest possible starting age.

Spain: The figure presents the most widespread situation across the country. In some Autonomous Communities, learning a second foreign language is compulsory. This is the case in Andalucía (grades 1 to 7), in Canarias (grades 5 to 9), in Región de Murcia (grades 5 to 8), and in Aragón and Galicia (grades 7 and 8).

Sweden: Besides English, all pupils between the ages of 12 and 15 (from the 6th to 9th grade) must choose a subject from the area 'Language choice'. For a vast majority of pupils (more than 80%), this means that they study a second foreign language. It is however also possible to use 'Language choice' to study a mother tongue other than Swedish, a national minority language, sign language, or more Swedish or English.

Differences in foreign language teaching requirements between general education and VET

After having examined the situation in general education, Figure 2.3 looks at vocational education and training (VET), providing details on foreign language learning opportunities in the VET programmes that offer access to higher education ⁽⁹⁾. This should be examined as pupils from both general and vocational pathways may, in principle, enter the same higher education programmes, and therefore should have access to the same opportunities for acquiring the foreign language skills needed to participate in transnational learning mobility. This also reflects the Council Recommendation which draws attention to the importance of ‘quality linguistic and cultural preparation for mobility *in both general and vocational education*’ ⁽¹⁰⁾.

The total length of time dedicated to compulsory foreign language teaching in VET is calculated on the assumption that VET pupils are in general education at pre-primary, primary and lower secondary levels before entering a vocational pathway at upper secondary level. Thus, differences between general and VET pupils lie in the differences between programmes *at upper secondary level*.

The requirements for compulsory teaching of foreign languages tend to be lower in VET programmes compared with general programmes in many European countries (see Figure 2.3). This especially concerns compulsory learning of the second foreign language. VET students usually learn one foreign language for a similar length of time as their peers in general education, but there is less emphasis on the second foreign language. In 20 education systems, VET pupils spend fewer years learning two foreign languages than their peers in general education. In most of these countries, there is no requirement to learn a second foreign language in VET tracks. There are two exceptions. In Bulgaria, all VET students have to study two compulsory foreign languages for two years while for their counterparts in general education, it is compulsory for four years. In Finland, all students in general upper secondary education are required to learn two foreign languages till their graduation. In VET, two foreign languages are among the competence requirements in all qualifications, but the duration of foreign language teaching is not centrally regulated. It varies according to requirements in the qualification concerned, student’s prior learning and personal competence development plan.

Two patterns may be distinguished in the group of countries where length of period with two foreign languages is shorter for (at least some) VET pupils:

- Most common is the situation when pupils are required to learn two foreign languages for a period of up to five years, *before* upper secondary education. However, once in upper secondary education, learning two foreign languages simultaneously is no longer compulsory for all VET pupils (though some may continue learning two foreign languages), whereas it is still compulsory in general education. VET students in Belgium (Flemish and German-speaking Communities), Czechia, Estonia, Greece, France, Latvia, the Netherlands, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Switzerland, Montenegro and Serbia therefore have some learning experience of two languages.
- In some countries, learning of two foreign languages is compulsory only in general upper secondary education. At least some VET students never learn two foreign languages simultaneously in Hungary, Austria, Slovenia, Slovakia, Norway and Türkiye.

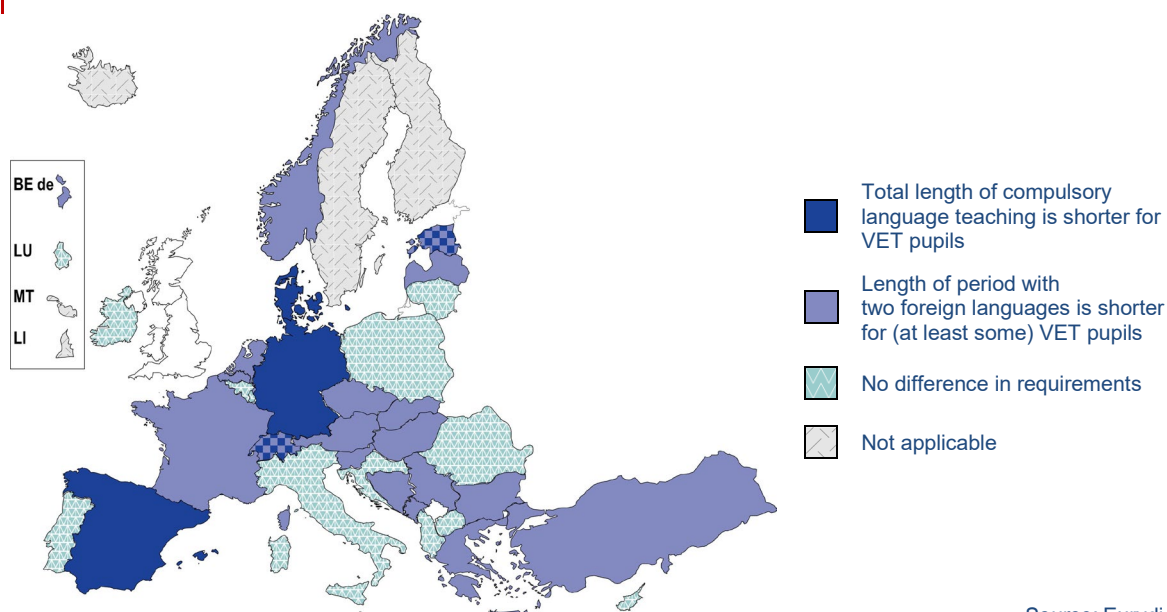
The compulsory learning of one foreign language is rather similar in VET and general upper secondary tracks. In most countries, VET students will have learnt one foreign language for the same number of years as their peers in general education. In six education systems (Denmark, Germany,

⁽⁹⁾ For more details on VET track included in the scope of the analysis, see the introductory part of Section 2.2.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on ‘Youth on the move’ – promoting the learning mobility of young people, OJ C199, 7.7.2011, C199/3, emphasis added.

Estonia, Spain, Finland and Switzerland), however, the length of time spent on compulsory foreign language teaching is shorter for (at least some) pupils on VET pathways. More specifically, in Denmark, Germany, Spain and Switzerland, foreign languages are not compulsory for all VET pupils. In Estonia, all pupils on VET pathways have to learn a foreign language during the first year of their studies, whereas for pupils in general education, language learning is compulsory throughout the whole of upper secondary education.

Figure 2.3: Differences in compulsory foreign language teaching for pupils on general and VET pathways, 2022/2023



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory notes

Differences are calculated for the whole period of foreign language learning. For VET pupils, both the total length of compulsory foreign language learning and the length of period learning two compulsory foreign languages are calculated on the assumption that they are in general education at pre-primary, primary and lower secondary levels, and enter a vocational pathway at upper secondary level. The figure only considers VET pathways giving direct access to higher education and fulfilling all the selection criteria described in the introductory part of Section 2.2.

The figure only considers the overlapping years of general and vocational education. Therefore, differences stemming from programmes of different lengths are not taken into account (e.g. when VET pathways are one year longer or shorter than the general pathway).

Country-specific notes

Malta, Sweden and Iceland: No VET pathways within the scope.

Finland: The duration of foreign language teaching is not centrally regulated for VET students. It varies according to requirements in the qualification concerned, student's prior learning and personal competence development plan. Two foreign languages are among the competence requirements in all qualifications.

Liechtenstein: The large majority of VET pupils attend vocational schools in Switzerland.

Norway: All upper secondary VET programmes give access to levels ISCED 4 and ISCED 5. However, to gain direct access to universities and university colleges (ISCED 6), VET graduates need to follow a one-year supplementary general education course. Since 2017, all VET graduates who so wish are legally entitled to take the supplementary course.

There are no differences between requirements for foreign language instruction in general and vocational education in less than a third of the education systems (12 systems). These systems share some similarities in the way that foreign language teaching is structured:

- at least two foreign languages are simultaneously compulsory at the upper secondary level in both general and vocational education (Cyprus, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania and North Macedonia);
- at upper secondary level, the compulsory minimum for all pupils is to learn one foreign language, while teaching of two foreign languages is compulsory for all pupils at lower secondary education (Italy, Lithuania and Portugal);

- pupils are never required to study two compulsory foreign languages simultaneously, and at upper secondary level, the compulsory minimum for all pupils is to learn one foreign language (Belgium – French Community, Croatia and Albania);
- there is no compulsory foreign language teaching at all in Ireland, so there are no differences in this respect between general and VET tracks.

2.3. Scoreboard indicator

Scoreboard indicator 2 is based on a five-category colour-coded scheme, where dark green represents the optimum preparation for learning mobility in terms of compulsory foreign language teaching and red signifies that there is no compulsory foreign language teaching at all. The descriptors in each category are based on the three dimensions explored above:

- total length of compulsory foreign language teaching from pre-primary to upper secondary level;
- length of the period when two foreign languages are compulsory simultaneously;
- differences in requirements for pupils in general education and in VET.

Since the total number of years of compulsory foreign language learning is similar for pupils in general education and VET, the scoreboard does not distinguish between the different pathways in this respect. Consequently, an education system can be placed in the highest possible category if the overall length of compulsory language teaching is 10 years or more in *both* general education and VET.

With respect to the number of years that are compulsory when studying two foreign languages simultaneously, the scoreboard does take into account the differences between pupils in general and vocational education (see the category descriptors related to the scoreboard indicator). For the education systems that do not have VET pathways according to the definition applied in this chapter (Malta, Sweden and Iceland) and for Liechtenstein, only the situation in general education is considered.

When all the dimensions are considered, Scoreboard indicator 2 (see Figure 2.4) shows that the majority of education systems find themselves in the first two categories (light and dark green):

Dark green: 11 education systems in which all pupils (in both general and vocational education) have to learn foreign languages for 10 years or more, and all pupils must study at least two compulsory languages at the same time for five years or more. This group includes two countries (Malta and Iceland) where only general education tracks are considered (as there are no VET tracks that lead to higher education). Six countries have the same requirements for students in general and VET tracks (Cyprus, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland ⁽¹¹⁾, Romania and North Macedonia). Three countries that belong to the group with the longest learning of two foreign languages (Greece, Latvia and Finland) formulate different requirements for general education and VET students.

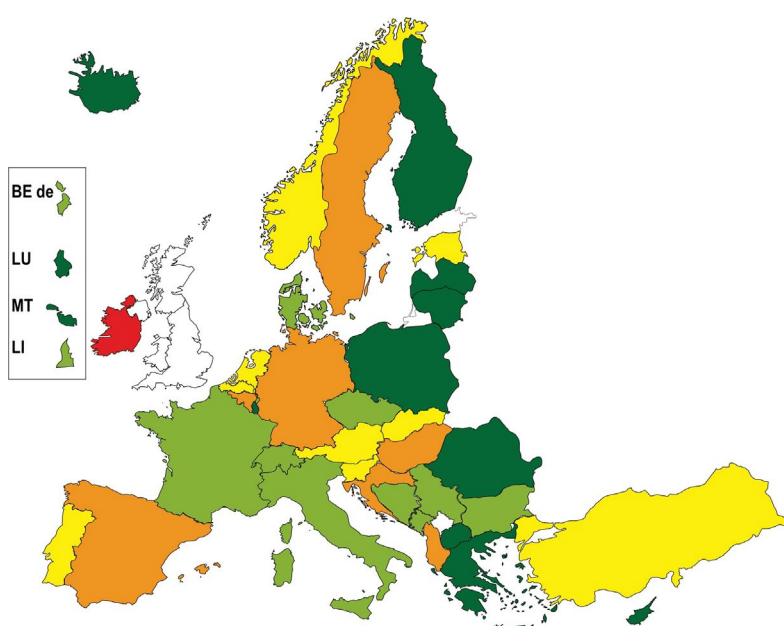
Light green: 11 education systems in which two languages are compulsory for all pupils for at least a short period of time. Most education systems in this group make foreign language learning compulsory for all pupils for 10 years or more, but the period when two compulsory foreign languages are being learned simultaneously is less than five years either for all pupils (Bulgaria, Italy and Liechtenstein), or for at least some pupils in VET tracks (Belgium – German-speaking Community, Czechia, France,

⁽¹¹⁾ In Poland, the total length of compulsory foreign language learning for VET students is one year longer than in general tracks as VET programmes are one year longer.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia). In Denmark and Switzerland, on the other hand, the difference between general and VET tracks lies in the length of learning the first foreign language. In these countries, VET students learn foreign language for less than 10 years. However, learning two foreign languages simultaneously is mandatory for five years in lower secondary education for all pupils.

Yellow: Nine education systems in which the overall length of foreign language teaching is less than 10 years and all pupils learn two foreign languages for at least a short period of time (Belgium – Flemish Community, Estonia, the Netherlands and Portugal), or the total period of compulsory language teaching is 10 years or longer for all, but at least some VET pupils never have to learn two foreign languages simultaneously (Austria, Slovenia, Slovakia, Norway and Türkiye).

Figure 2.4: Scoreboard indicator 2: Preparation of opportunities for learning mobility – foreign language skills, 2022/2023



Source: Eurydice.

Scoreboard indicator categories:

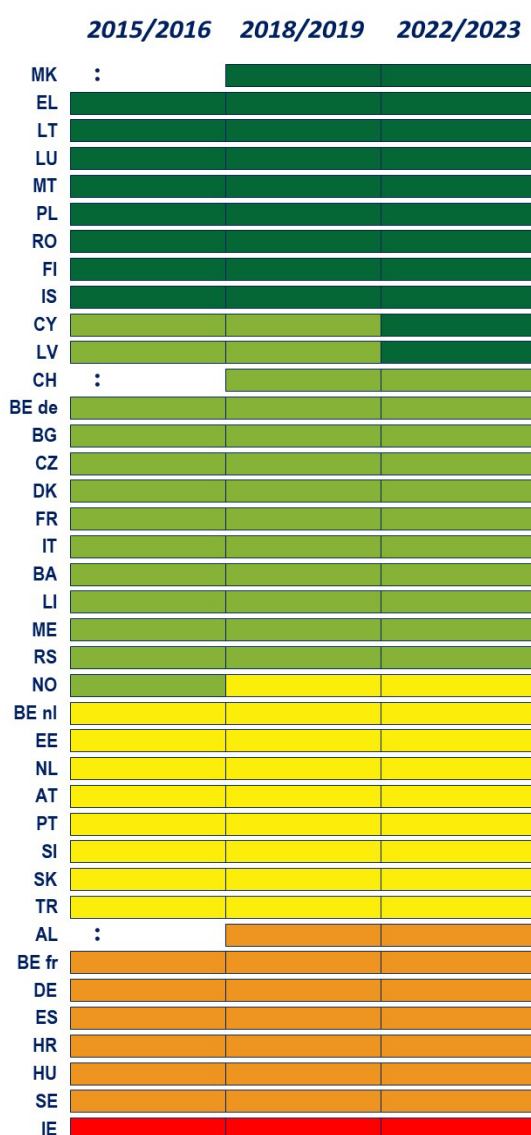
	Total compulsory foreign language teaching lasts for 10 years or more for all pupils. Pupils in both general and vocational education have to learn two foreign languages simultaneously for at least 5 years.
	Total compulsory foreign language teaching lasts for 10 years or more for all pupils. Pupils in both general and vocational education have to learn two foreign languages simultaneously, but at least some of the pupils have to do so for less than 5 years. OR Total compulsory foreign language teaching lasts for less than 10 years for all pupils. Pupils in both general and vocational education have to learn two foreign languages simultaneously for at least 5 years.
	Total compulsory foreign language teaching lasts for 10 years or more for all pupils. Pupils on general pathways have to learn at least two foreign languages, but at least some VET pupils never have to learn two foreign languages at the same time. OR Total compulsory foreign language teaching lasts for less than 10 years for all pupils. Pupils in both general and vocational education have to learn two foreign languages simultaneously, but at least some of the pupils have to do so for less than 5 years.
	Only one foreign language is compulsory for all pupils.
	No compulsory foreign language teaching.

Orange: Seven education systems in which learning two foreign languages at the same time is not a requirement for all pupils (Belgium – French Community, Germany, Spain, Croatia, Hungary, Sweden and Albania).

Red: One country in which there is no compulsory foreign language teaching. In Ireland, all students study official languages English and Irish, which are not considered as foreign languages according to their national definitions.

2.4. The development of the scoreboard indicator over time

Figure 2.5: Scoreboard indicator 2: Changes over time, 2015/2016, 2018/2019 and 2022/2023



Source: Eurydice.

: Did not participate in data collection

Explanatory notes

Education systems are primarily sorted according to the colour-coded categories in 2022/2023. See Figure 2.4 for the definition of categories.

This last section compares Scoreboard indicator 2 values between 2015/2016 and 2022/2023. Figure 2.5 shows very few changes. Two countries moved one category up during the last round:

In Cyprus, from 2022/2023 all students study two languages for six years (extended by two years).

In Latvia, since 2020/2021, the starting age for a second foreign language is 10 instead of 12; the total duration increased to 9 years in general education and to 6 years for VET students.

Norway moved one category down between the first and the second round due to a reclassification of VET programmes. Since 2018/2019, VET programmes are considered within the scope of the scoreboard. While students in general upper secondary education are required to learn two foreign languages simultaneously for one year, this is not compulsory for VET students.

While staying in the same category, many European countries have implemented reforms in foreign language learning since 2015/2016. Most of these reforms have lowered the starting age of compulsory foreign language learning, which implies that pupils' overall exposure to foreign languages has been extended. More specifically:

The total length of compulsory learning of one foreign language was extended in Greece (from 10 to 14 years), Cyprus (from 12 to 13 years), Luxembourg (from 13 to 16 years), Poland (from 13 to 16 years), Finland (from 10 to 12 years), Albania (from 10 to 12 years) and Montenegro (from 10 to 13 years).

The total length of compulsory learning of two foreign languages was extended in Belgium (Flemish Community) (from 5 to 6 years), Greece (from 5 to 7 years), France (from 5 to 6 years), Cyprus (from 4 to 6 years), Latvia (from 7 to 9 years) and Finland (from 6 to 7 years).

Since 2015/2016, one country introduced reforms regarding foreign language learning in VET pathways. In Finland, following a reform introduced in 2018, the duration of foreign language teaching is not centrally regulated for VET students. It varies according to requirements in the qualification concerned, student's prior learning and personal competence development plan. Two foreign languages are among the competence requirements in all qualifications ⁽¹²⁾.

For more detailed information on foreign language teaching in Europe, please consult an in-depth Eurydice report 'Key data on teaching languages at school in Europe – 2023 edition' (European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2023a).

To sum up, the findings of this chapter demonstrate that learning one foreign language is compulsory in nearly all European education systems. Typically, pupils must learn one foreign language for 10 to 12 years. Learning two foreign languages simultaneously is compulsory for all pupils in the majority of European countries for a shorter period, most commonly 6 years.

The chapter also identifies differences in compulsory foreign language learning between general education and vocational education programmes. More specifically, although in most countries pupils in both general and VET pathways study one foreign language for a similar number of years, the learning of two foreign languages is less common in VET. This might be a source of concern, given that pupils from both groups are able to enter the same higher education programmes, and therefore should have the same opportunities for learning languages so that they are equally able to participate successfully in transnational learning mobility.

⁽¹²⁾ In Finland, pupils study one foreign language for 9 years and two foreign languages simultaneously for 4 years before entering upper secondary education. Since two foreign languages are required in VET, the scoreboard considers that all VET students study two foreign languages for at least one additional year. This results in the total duration of studying one foreign language to 10 years and two foreign languages to 5 years for VET students.

CHAPTER 3: PORTABILITY OF GRANTS AND LOANS

3.1. Introduction

Financial burden is one of the main obstacles to learning mobility (Hauschildt et al., 2021). At European level, the issue is addressed through the provision of financial support delivered mainly through the Erasmus+ programme. Another important aspect of mobility funding is the possibility for students to take their domestic support abroad. This possibility – that is referred to as ‘portability’ – should ideally apply to both short-term study visits in the framework of a home-country programme (credit mobility) and entire-degree courses (degree mobility).

The Council Recommendation ‘Youth on the move’ invites Member States to examine their domestic support, looking, in particular, at ‘the portability of grants, loans and appropriate access to relevant benefits, in order to facilitate the learning mobility of young people’ ⁽¹⁾. The term ‘domestic support’ refers to financial support issued by authorities in the home country. This direct financial support generally falls into two main categories: grants and loans.

Public **grants** are direct financial aid from the public budget that students do not have to pay back. **Loans** have to be paid back. In other words, the costs of participating in higher education are (at least partly) pre-financed by financial institutions, but students reimburse the loan later on, often when they graduate, or have gainful employment. Publicly subsidised loans also imply that the government bears a part of the costs, for example through reduced interest rates. This can also take the form of a government guarantee: when student loans are guaranteed or insured by the government against the risk of default and loss. Private grants and loans with no public guarantee are not considered in the scoreboard.

Scoreboard indicator 3 examines the extent to which higher education students can use their domestic grant or loan for studying abroad.

3.2. Scoreboard data

This section focuses on the portability of domestic support within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), i.e. the possibility for students to take domestic grants and/or loans to another EHEA system. Beyond portability, the section also provides a brief overview on how many students receive public grants and/or loans. This is a key factor because if only a small proportion of students in a country receive public support, full portability of grants or loans might not contribute significantly to promoting transnational learning mobility.

Grants

Public grants are the most widespread form of public support ⁽²⁾. Figure 3.1 indicates the proportion of students receiving a grant, meaning public financial support that does not need to be paid back. The data shows that in most European countries, between 15% and 50% of all students benefit from public grants. The highest proportion of grant beneficiaries – 85% or more – is found in Denmark, Cyprus, Malta and Sweden, followed by Luxembourg and Finland. Finally, 11 higher education systems – most of which are situated in south-eastern Europe – provide public grants to less than 15% of their first-

⁽¹⁾ Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on ‘Youth on the move’ – promoting the learning mobility of young people, OJ C199, 7.7.2011, C199/4.

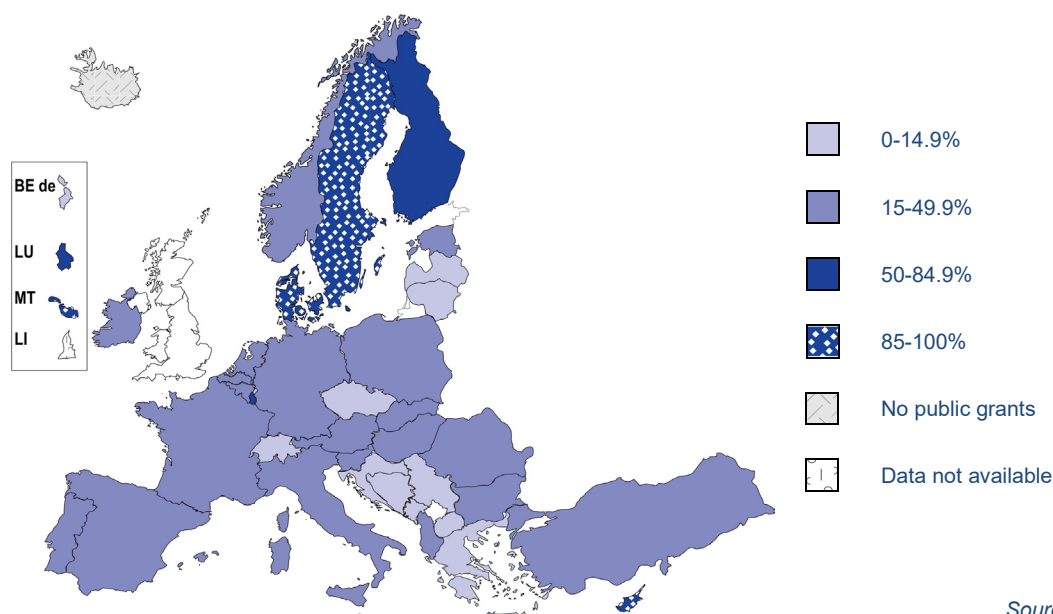
⁽²⁾ For more details on grants and loans, see [National Student Fee and Support Systems in European Higher Education 2022/2023 | Eurydice \(europa.eu\)](#) (European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2023b).

and second-cycle students. Iceland has no public grant scheme and therefore falls into a separate category.

In most cases the data on grant beneficiaries is aggregated for the first and second cycle. When data per cycle is available, usually both proportions fall in the same category of the wide brackets on Figure 3.1. There are a few differences, however. Montenegro and North Macedonia offer public grants only for first cycle students. In Denmark, Ireland and Malta, the proportion of grant beneficiaries is lower in the second cycle.

Moreover, the figure considers funding that combines grants and loans on an equal footing. For example, general public student support (BAföG) in Germany, which provides half of the individual amount awarded as a grant, and half as an interest-free loan, is also considered in the total proportion of students receiving a public grant.

Figure 3.1: Proportion of students receiving a public grant, first and second cycle, 2021/2022



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory notes

Public grants refer to public financial support provided directly to students which does not need to be paid back. Grants for study abroad (mobility grants) are not considered here.

In most cases, the figure presents aggregated data for the first and the second cycle. Countries where the first and the second cycle differ substantially in terms of the proportion of grant beneficiaries are represented by the first cycle. Countries with several grant schemes that were not able to provide aggregated data for all schemes, are represented by the scheme with the highest proportion of beneficiaries. Combined grants/loans systems are treated on an equal footing with grants.

For more details on grants and loans, see [National Student Fee and Support Systems in European Higher Education 2022/2023 | Eurydice \(europa.eu\)](#) (European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2023b).

Country-specific notes

Ireland and Türkiye: 2017/2018 data.

Romania and Slovakia: 2018/2019 data.

Belgium (BE de), Greece, Latvia and Bosnia and Herzegovina: 2019/2020 data.

Germany and France: 2020/2021 data.

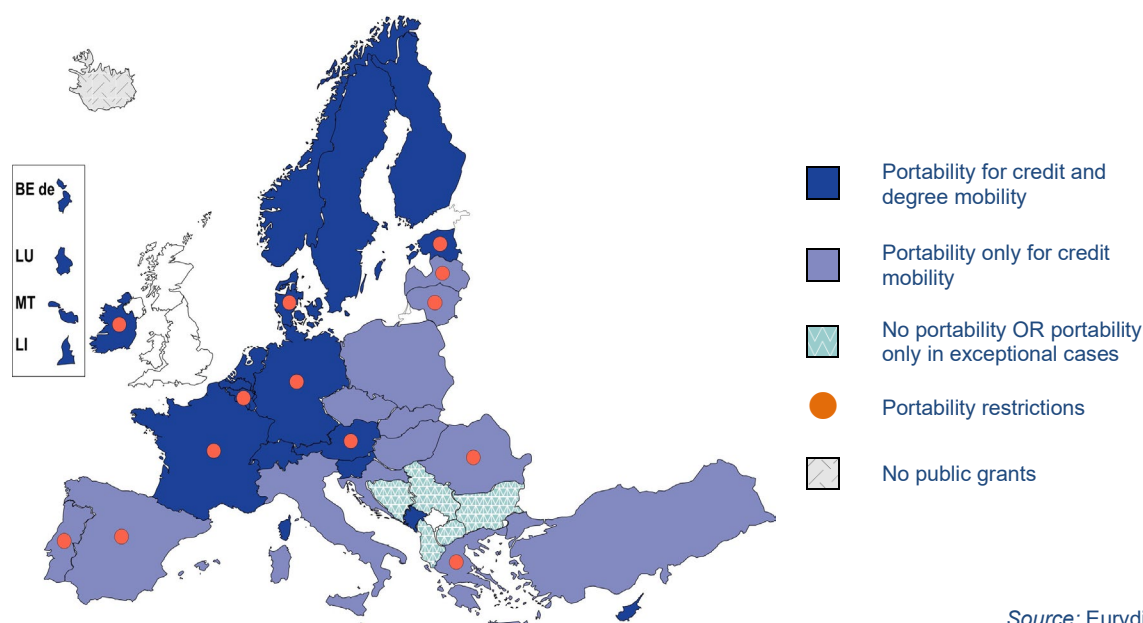
Figure 3.2 moves to the core topic of this chapter, showing the main characteristics of transnational portability in the case of grants. It distinguishes between portability for short-term study visits which lead to credits in the framework of a home country programme (credit mobility) and portability for an entire degree course (degree mobility). Moreover, the figure provides details on portability restrictions, meaning additional requirements that students and/or the chosen study programme abroad need to fulfil for the grant to be portable. These include, for example, specifying the countries to which

students can take their grants (e.g. portability within the European Economic Area only) or placing limits on the time spent abroad. The most severe restriction is when students can only take their grants abroad to study if no equivalent programme is available in the home country. Since this means that portability is allowed only in exceptional cases, countries applying this condition are depicted in the same way as those having 'no portability'.

The figure shows that several countries situated in south-eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia) apply the most restrictive policies in terms of grant portability. In general, students from these countries cannot use their domestic grants when studying abroad, be it for a short period of time (credit mobility) or a longer period (degree mobility).

One third of all higher education systems considered limit grant portability to credit mobility. Some higher education systems apply portability restrictions, limiting, in particular, the portability of grants to programme exchanges within recognised schemes such as Erasmus+ (e.g. Greece, Spain, Latvia, Lithuania and Portugal).

Figure 3.2: Portability of public grants, first and second cycle, 2022/2023



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory notes

The figure focuses on the portability of grants within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Where several grant schemes are available with different conditions attached with respect to portability, the grant scheme with the highest percentage of beneficiaries is shown.

When the category 'portability for credit and degree mobility' is combined with 'portability restrictions', it means that there are restrictions related either to both types of portability (i.e. credit **and** degree) or to one type only (i.e. credit **or** degree).

Country-specific note

Estonia: The predominant grant scheme is a need-based study allowance, which targets students in difficult economic circumstances. This allowance is portable for credit as well as degree mobility. However, some other types of grants – including merit-based grants and stipends for studying in specific (priority) fields – are available only for credit mobility.

Finally, there are countries where grants are portable for both credit and degree mobility purposes. This category encompasses different types of higher education systems, ranging from small systems where students commonly follow their studies abroad (e.g. Belgium – German-speaking Community, Luxembourg and Liechtenstein), to large systems, such as Germany and France. Most of the countries offering grants that are portable for credit as well as degree mobility are situated in northern and north-western Europe. However, as the figure shows, some of these countries apply portability restrictions. For example, Germany limits degree portability to EU countries and to Switzerland.

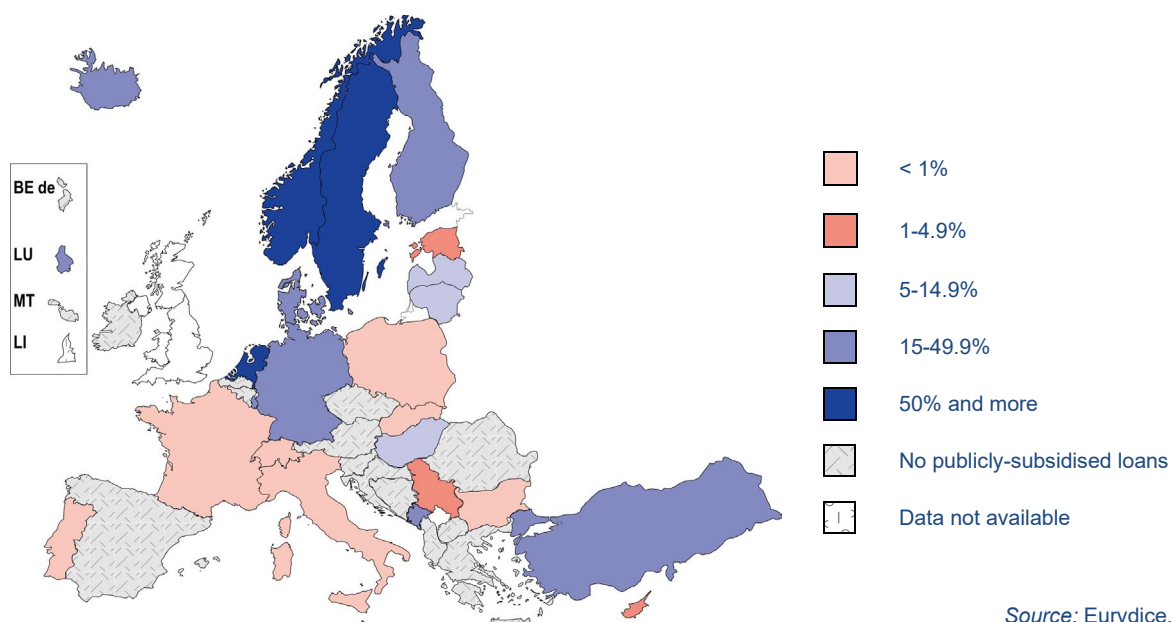
Ireland provides a further example of portability restrictions, limiting credit portability to mobility explicitly required by home country programmes, and portability for degree purposes to EU countries and the United Kingdom.

Regarding portability for degree study abroad, Austria represents a specific case: students can receive a degree mobility grant under the same conditions as domestic grants for studying within the country, if they intend to study in countries of the European Economic Area, the United Kingdom or Switzerland. Therefore, the situation in Austria is comparable to countries where grants are portable for credit as well as degree mobility, yet, with some restrictions related to geography (i.e. studying only in certain EHEA countries).

Loans

Some countries offer publicly-subsidised loans in addition to or instead of grants. However, Figure 3.3 shows that compared to public grants, loans are much less common. State guaranteed student loans are available in less than two-thirds of all the higher education systems studied. Moreover, in several countries where such loans exist, virtually no one actually receives or uses them (up to 1% in Bulgaria, France, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia and Switzerland). Few students take state guaranteed student loans in Estonia, Cyprus and Serbia, where the proportion of student loan beneficiaries lies between 1% and 4.9%. In contrast, more than half of first and second cycle students receive a state guaranteed student loan in the Netherlands (57%), Sweden (75%) and Norway (66%). They are followed by Denmark, Germany, Latvia, Luxembourg, Finland, Iceland, Montenegro and Türkiye, where the proportion of students taking loans lies between 15 and 50%. In Latvia, Lithuania and Hungary, approximately 6-8% of students take a state guaranteed loan.

Figure 3.3: Proportion of students taking out publicly-subsidised loans, first and second cycle, 2021/2022



Explanatory notes

Publicly-subsidised loans refer to repayable financial aid where the government bears a part of the costs. This can take the form of a government guarantee which covers the risk of default and loss. Private loans with no public guarantee are not considered. In some countries, under certain conditions, certain amounts of student loans may be converted into grants. Please find more about this at [National Student Fee and Support Systems in European Higher Education 2022/2023 | Eurydice \(europa.eu\)](#) (European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2023b).

In most cases, the figure presents aggregated data for the first and the second cycle. Countries where the first and the second

cycle differ substantially in terms of the proportion of loan beneficiaries are represented by the first cycle. Combined grants/loans systems are treated on an equal footing with loans.

Country-specific notes

Belgium (BE fr): Loans that were little used have been abolished in favour of study grants.

Belgium (BE de): No publicly-subsidised loans (i.e. no loans depicted on the figure). However, students studying in the German-speaking Community can apply for loans managed by the Province of Liège of the French Community of Belgium.

Greece: For second cycle studies the legal basis for publicly subsidised loans has been established but it is not applied.

Germany: The figure refers to the proportion of students that receive general public student support (BAföG), which awards half of the individual amount as a grant, and half as an interest-free loan.

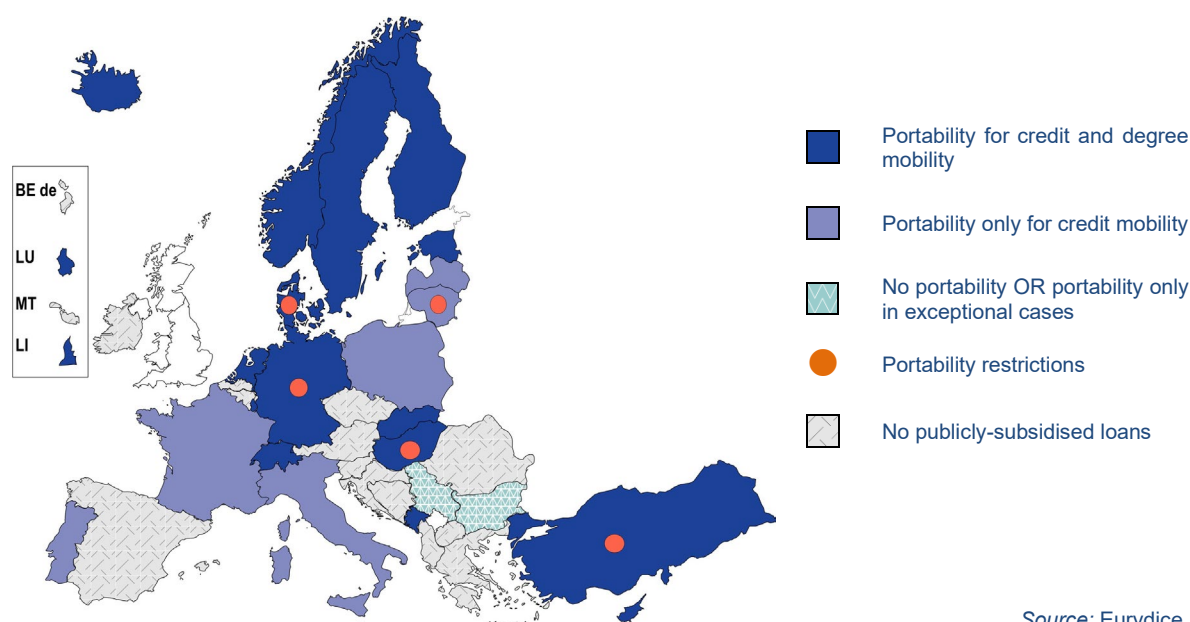
Iceland: 2017/2018 data.

Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland: 2020/2021 data.

Türkiye: 2019/2020 data. The Figure shows data for the first cycle, the % is lower for the second cycle.

Figure 3.4 examines whether publicly-subsidised loans are portable and, if so, whether there are any specific restrictions on portability. The information is structured similarly to Figure 3.2 on grants, in that it distinguishes between portability for credit and degree mobility, and identifies countries with portability restrictions.

Figure 3.4: Portability of publicly-subsidised loans, first and second cycle, 2022/2023



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory notes

The figure focuses on portability within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Where several loan schemes are available with different conditions attached with respect to portability, the loan scheme with the highest percentage of beneficiaries is shown.

When the category 'portability for credit and degree mobility' is combined with 'portability restrictions', it means that there are restrictions related either to both types of portability (i.e. credit **and** degree) or to one type only (i.e. credit **or** degree).

In general, most countries that offer publicly-subsidised loans allow a certain level of portability. Students may take domestic loans to another EHEA system for credit and degree mobility without any restrictions in half of the countries that offer this type of public financial support. This includes the three countries where more than half of students take state guaranteed study loans, namely the Netherlands, Sweden and Norway (see Figure 3.3). Most of the countries where the proportion of loan beneficiaries lies between 15 and 50% also allow portability for both credit and degree mobility (Luxembourg, Finland, Iceland and Montenegro), although some with restrictions (Denmark, Germany and Türkiye).

Students have the possibility to take domestic loans to another EHEA system for short-term study visits in the framework of a home-country programme (credit mobility), but not for the entire-degree

courses (degree mobility) in France, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Portugal. Among these countries, some apply additional limitations. For example, in Lithuania, loans are only portable if the mobility experience falls under recognised exchange schemes such as Erasmus+.

There are only two countries (Bulgaria and Serbia), where students cannot benefit from their loans if they study abroad, be it for credit or degree purposes. However, few students benefit from state guaranteed loans in these countries: less than 1% in Bulgaria and less than 5% in Serbia.

3.3. Scoreboard indicator

Scoreboard indicator 3 brings together some of the elements presented in the previous section and puts countries' existing schemes into pre-defined categories. The indicator concentrates on the portability of domestic grants and loans. It does not include information on the actual amount of portable financial support or the proportion of student beneficiaries ⁽³⁾.

The indicator is based on a five-category colour-coded scheme where dark green represents full portability of all available domestic student support (this means that equivalent conditions apply to the awarding of public grants and/or provision of loans regardless of whether students intend to study in the home country or abroad). At the other end of the scale, the red category signifies no portability, or portability that is only permitted if no equivalent programme is available in the home country, i.e. domestic support is only portable in exceptional circumstances. There are three transitional categories between dark green and red. The first of them – light green – refers to systems where domestic support can be taken abroad for credit and degree mobility. However, some restrictions apply, e.g. portability only applies to certain defined countries or there are limits on the time spent abroad. The two other categories – yellow and orange – cover systems that limit the portability of all or most forms of domestic support to credit mobility, the distinguishing feature between the two categories being the presence or absence of portability restrictions.

In accordance with these criteria, countries are distributed as follows:

Dark green: 14 education systems in which domestic support is fully portable for both forms of study abroad – credit as well as degree mobility. Most of them provide grants as well as loans (Cyprus, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Finland, Sweden, Liechtenstein, Montenegro and Norway); others focus only on one means of support. Belgium (German-speaking and Flemish Communities), Malta, Slovenia and Switzerland offer fully portable grants but no loans (or very few loans). Iceland has a rather unique position, providing no standard grant package, yet offering fully portable loans.

It should be recalled that while offering fully portable domestic support, these systems differ substantially with respect to the proportion of beneficiaries (see Figures 3.1 and 3.3). The proportion of beneficiaries is low in Belgium (German-speaking and Flemish Communities), Slovenia, Switzerland, and Montenegro.

Light green: In seven education systems (Belgium (French Community), Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, France and Austria), domestic support is portable for credit and degree mobility purposes, but with some restrictions. The portability might be limited to programme exchanges within recognised schemes such as Erasmus+, specific countries or time spent abroad. For example, in Estonia, the main grant schemes (need-based study allowance and scholarships for students with

⁽³⁾ While the indicator does not take into account the proportion of student beneficiaries, it still excludes financial support measures (domestic grants or loans) with less than 1% of beneficiaries.

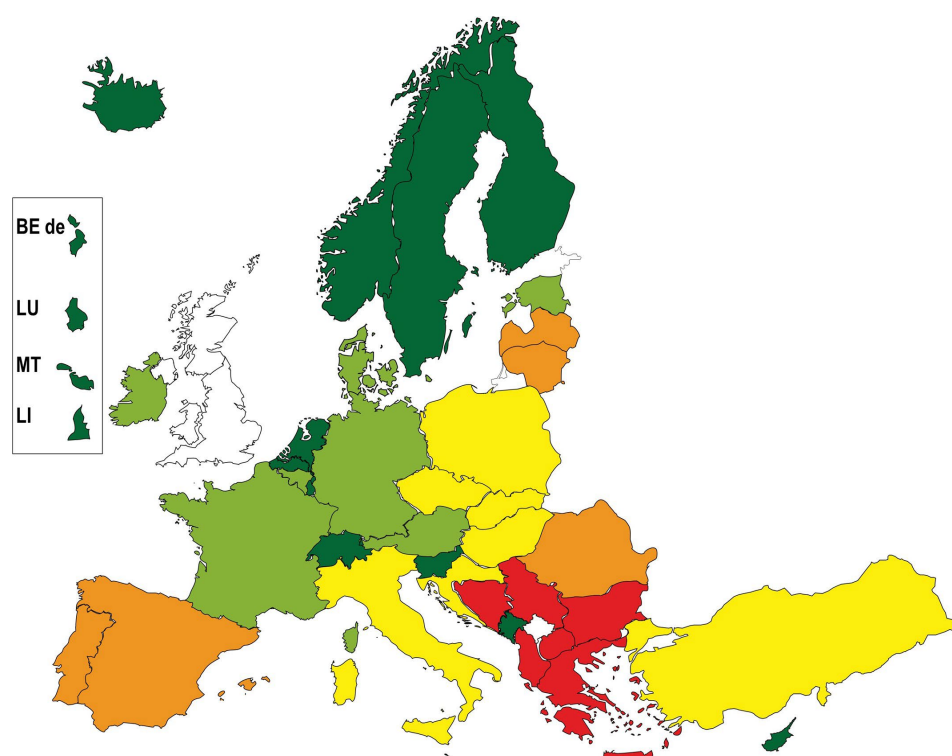
special needs) as well as loans are fully portable, but the portability of merit-based grants and stipends for studying in specific (priority) fields is limited to credit mobility.

Yellow: Seven systems (Czechia, Croatia, Italy, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Türkiye) limit the portability of domestic grants to credit mobility. Most of these countries do not offer loans or very few students (<1%) use them. There are some exceptions. Hungary and Türkiye provide publicly-subsidised loans that are portable for both credit as well as degree mobility, but with some restrictions. However, grants are only portable for credit mobility experiences.

Orange: Five countries (Spain, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal and Romania) allow portability for credit mobility, but with restrictions.

Red: In six higher education systems (Bulgaria, Greece, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia), domestic support is either very limited, not portable, or is portable only in exceptional circumstances, such as when there is no equivalent programme in the home system.

Figure 3.5: Scoreboard indicator 3: Portability of domestic public grants and publicly-subsidised loans, 2022/2023



Source: Eurydice.

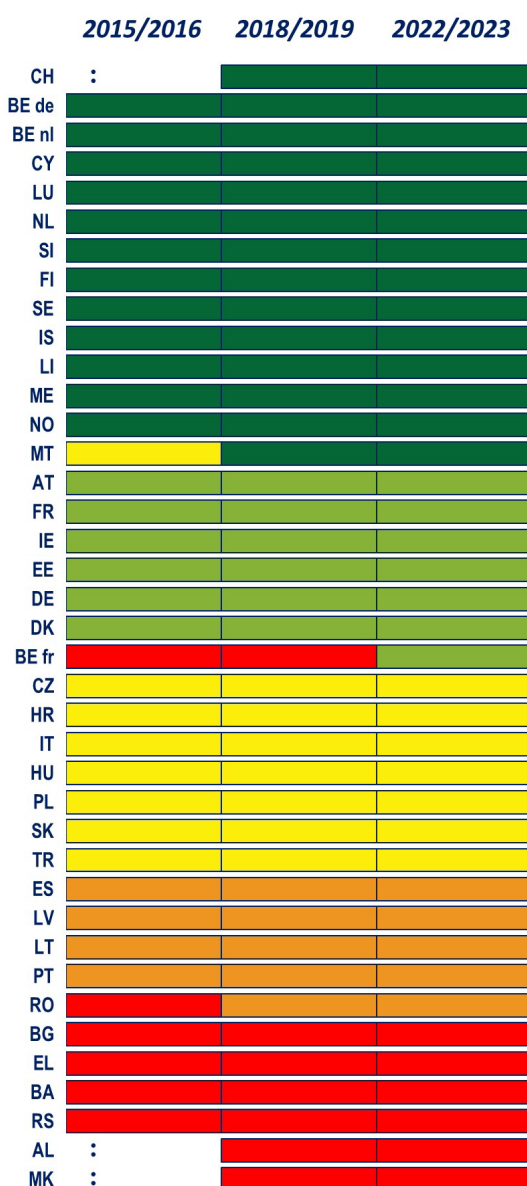
Scoreboard indicator categories:

	Full portability across the EHEA of all available domestic student support measures – grants and/or loans – for credit and degree mobility. Equivalent requirements for public grants and/or loans if students study in the home country or abroad.
	Portability of available domestic student support measures – grants and/or loans – for credit and degree mobility, but with some restrictions related to geography (country limitations), and/or types of programme, and/or field of study or time.
	Portability for credit mobility, without restrictions. No portability for degree mobility OR not all major support measures are portable for degree mobility.
	Portability for credit mobility but with some restrictions related to geography (country limitations), and/or types of programme, and/or field of study or time. No portability for degree mobility OR not all major support measures are portable for degree mobility.
	No portability: public grants and/or loans are only provided if students study in the home country or in exceptional cases (no equivalent programme is available in the home country).

3.4. The development of the scoreboard indicator over time

This last section compares Scoreboard indicator 3 values between 2015/2016 and 2022/2023. Figure 3.6 shows very few changes. Belgium (French Community), Malta and Romania are the only education systems that have enhanced the portability of domestic grants.

Figure 3.6: Scoreboard indicator 3: Changes over time, 2015/2016, 2018/2019 and 2022/2023



Source: Eurydice.

: Did not participate in data collection

Explanatory notes

Education systems are primarily sorted according to the colour-coded categories in 2022/2023. See Figure 3.5 for the definition of categories.

In Belgium (French Community), from 2022/2023, the benefit of study allowance (domestic grant) was extended to full-time first and second cycle studies in the EU ⁽⁴⁾.

Since 2020, Latvia somewhat reduced the portability of loans, but remained in the same category (orange). Study loans are now available only for students who are enrolled at a Latvian higher education institution ⁽⁵⁾.

This chapter has discussed the portability of domestic financial support as one of the key conditions for learner mobility. Indeed, students considering studying abroad – be it for a short period of time (credit mobility) or to complete a full degree (degree mobility) – may base their decision on whether the financial support available for studying in their home country can be used elsewhere.

Overall, in around half of all European higher education systems, domestic grants and loans are portable (though some restrictions may apply). The analysis suggests that portability of domestic support is more open for short term study visits in the framework of a home-country programme (credit mobility) than entire-degree courses (degree mobility).

Another noteworthy aspect is the tendency to offer more portability in the case of loans than in the case of grants. Indeed, in some systems, loans are portable for credit as well as degree mobility, whereas the portability of grants is limited to credit mobility.

Moreover, the data points to a rather clear geographical pattern, in particular a contrast between northern and north-western Europe with a high degree of portability, and south-eastern Europe with lower levels of public support and its portability.

⁽⁴⁾ 2021 [Allocations Decree](#), article 2 § 4.

⁽⁵⁾ See point 6 of the Regulations on study and student lending for studies in Latvia [here](#).

CHAPTER 4: SUPPORTING DISADVANTAGED LEARNERS TO PARTICIPATE IN LEARNING MOBILITY

4.1. Introduction

Not all students have equal access to learning mobility opportunities. Evidence shows that students from low socio-economic backgrounds and students with disabilities are less likely to participate in such programmes (Hauschildt et al., 2021; European Commission, 2019). Disadvantaged students therefore miss out on the benefits conferred by these experiences, further deepening the divide with their peers.

In order to improve the current situation, the Council Recommendation encourages Member States to 'provide disadvantaged learners, who may be deprived of opportunities for learning mobility, with targeted information on available programmes and support tailored to their specific needs' ⁽¹⁾. Scoreboard indicator 4 therefore looks at whether such support is available in European countries.

4.2. Scoreboard data

The definition of what constitutes a 'disadvantaged learner' varies widely across Europe. Nevertheless, two main groups of learners are usually included in this category: students from low socio-economic backgrounds and students with disabilities. Therefore, this scoreboard indicator focuses mostly on the opportunities given to these two groups.

The indicator is built on four main actions to be carried out by top-level authorities with respect to the participation of disadvantaged students in learning mobility:

1. setting long-term quantitative objectives for the participation of disadvantaged learners;
2. establishing a system to monitor their participation;
3. offering financial support to disadvantaged students in the form of public grants;
4. recommending or incentivising higher education institutions to introduce targeted measures to encourage the participation of disadvantaged learners.

These aspects are discussed in turn.

Quantitative objectives

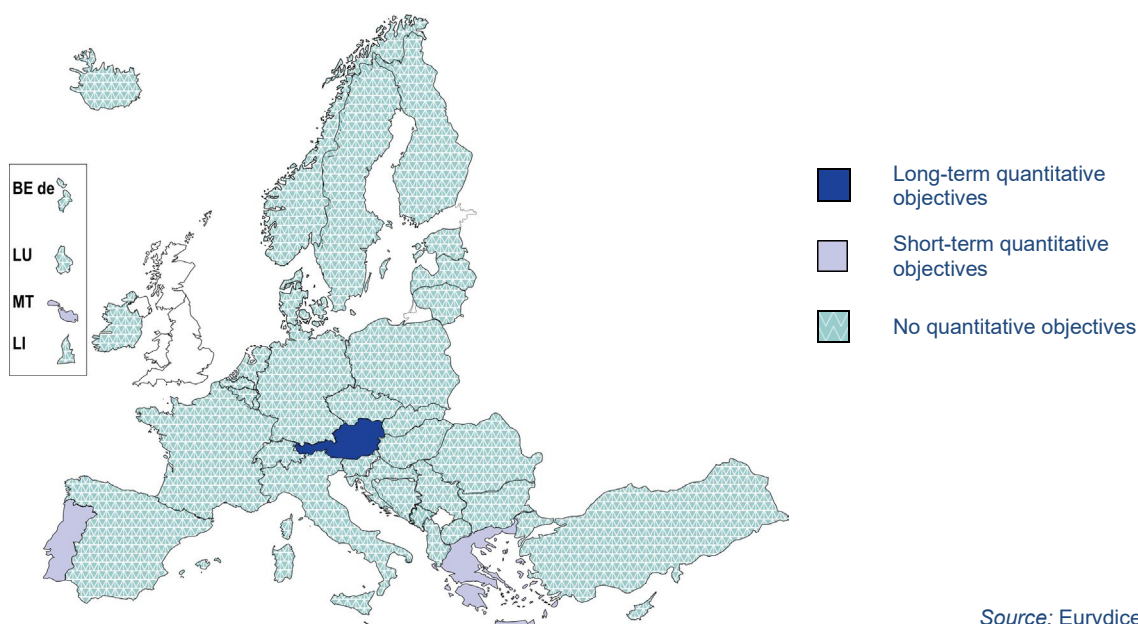
The quantitative objectives referred to in this section are numerical targets set by top-level authorities for the proportion of disadvantaged students participating in learning mobility. The setting of such objectives signals a strong political commitment towards increasing the participation of disadvantaged students in learning mobility programmes.

Figure 4.1 distinguishes between two types of quantitative objective for the participation of disadvantaged learners. First, long-term objectives (over one year) are usually set as part of top-level strategies on higher education or learning mobility. These now exist only in Austria, which aims to increase the participation of students with parents without higher education qualifications in learning mobility programmes to at least 18% by 2025 ⁽²⁾. Belgium (Flemish Community), France and Slovenia, which previously had such targets, are now in the process of redefining their strategic objectives.

⁽¹⁾ Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on 'Youth on the move' – promoting the learning mobility of young people, OJ C199, 7.7.2011, C199/4.

⁽²⁾ Nationale Strategie zur sozialen Dimension in der Hochschulbildung, 2017: http://www.sozialerhebung.at/sozdim/strategiepapier/Strategie_2017.pdf

Figure 4.1: Quantitative objectives on the participation of disadvantaged learners in mobility programmes, 2022/2023



Source: Eurydice.

Second, year-on-year targets are typically set by national Erasmus+ agencies. Examples of short-term objectives can be found in Greece (in 2022/2023, 20% of Erasmus+ students should be students with fewer opportunities), Malta (in 2022/2023, the target is 5% for the participation of disadvantaged students in higher education mobility programmes) and Portugal (in 2022/2023, 2% of students in higher education mobility programmes should be students with fewer opportunities).

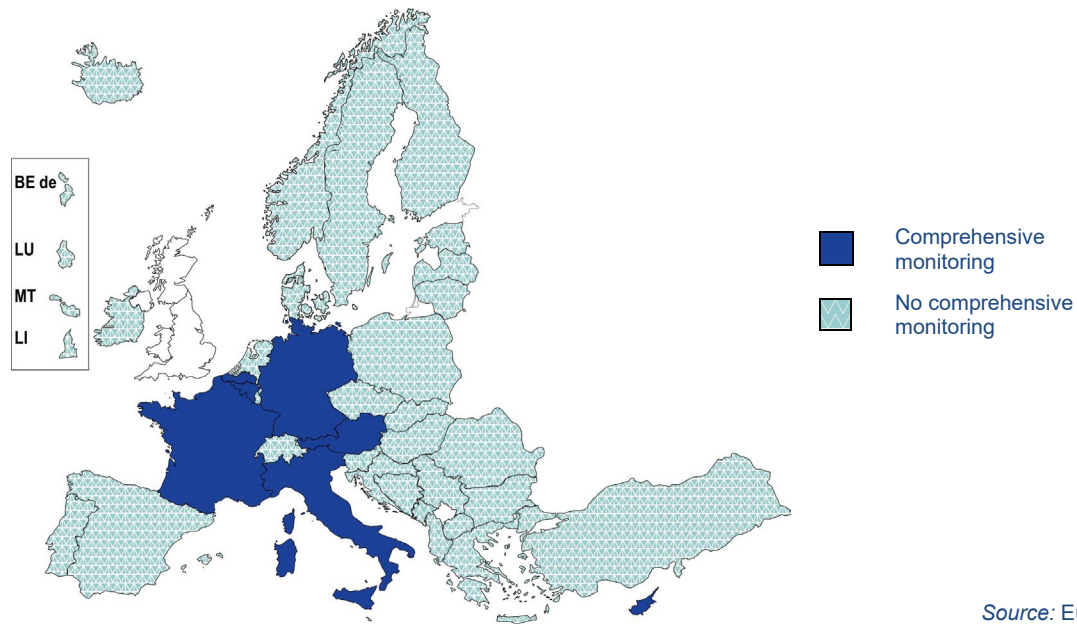
Having quantitative targets does not seem to be a stable strategic direction that European countries are taking. Several long-term targets introduced between 2015/2016 and 2018/2019 have already been abandoned or are in the process of being redefined (in Belgium – Flemish Community, France and Slovenia). At the same time, Malta and Portugal have introduced new annual targets to be redefined each year.

Monitoring participation

In order to be able to provide the right support for disadvantaged students, policymakers need to gather information on the extent to which different groups participate in learning mobility. Such information can be obtained through monitoring relevant characteristics of the participating student population.

All countries participating in the Erasmus+ programme are required to monitor participation in this specific programme. For this reason, this section concentrates on practices *going beyond* this obligation, and takes a wider look at the monitoring of participation rates of disadvantaged students across all major mobility programmes.

Figure 4.2, therefore, depicts comprehensive monitoring practices – those seeking to provide a comprehensive picture of the participation of disadvantaged students across all major mobility programmes. Seven education systems have such comprehensive monitoring systems (Belgium – French and Flemish Communities, Germany, France, Italy, Cyprus and Austria). With the exception of Cyprus, these monitoring systems were all in place already in 2015/2016. In Cyprus, the monitoring tool was introduced in 2021/2022.

Figure 4.2: Monitoring the participation of disadvantaged learners in mobility programmes, 2022/2023

Source: Eurydice.

Monitoring systems differ in the way information is collected:

- in Belgium (French and Flemish Communities) ⁽³⁾, France and Cyprus ⁽⁴⁾, data on students participating in mobility programmes are collected by the ministries of education;
- in Germany and Austria, student surveys are conducted every three to four years ⁽⁵⁾;
- in Italy, information on these students is included in the annual data collection of statistical offices ⁽⁶⁾.

Financial support

Financial support is essential if disadvantaged students are to participate in international mobility. Given the financial difficulties of students from low socio-economic backgrounds, or the extra financial burden facing students with disabilities, the learning mobility support considered here is restricted to non-repayable forms of public support: *public grants* ⁽⁷⁾. Two main models of this type of provision exist in Europe.

In the first model, disadvantaged students receive *targeted support* that is available only to them. This can take the form of either specific learning mobility grants, or need-based domestic grants that are portable, at least for credit mobility. Specific mobility grants are provided specifically for learning

⁽³⁾ In Belgium (Flemish Community), the Ministry of Education and Training has a central database for higher education which contains all data on mobility, including information on students' socio-economic background or disability.

⁽⁴⁾ In Cyprus, the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth developed an online platform in 2021/2022, which aims to collect data from all higher education institutions in Cyprus regarding the composition of their student population, including among the participants of mobility programmes. The annual report 'Mapping of the Educational Field for Higher Education in Cyprus' for the academic year 2021/2022 will include such statistical data.

⁽⁵⁾ See the Social Survey website https://www.dzhw.eu/en/forschung/projekt?pr_id=650 for Germany, and the survey results at <http://www.sozialerhebung.at/index.php/en/> for Austria.

⁽⁶⁾ In Italy, the statistical office collects data on the mobility of students, distinguishing between grant holders and non-grant holders. Given that grants are awarded on need-based criteria, this provides information on students by socio-economic background.

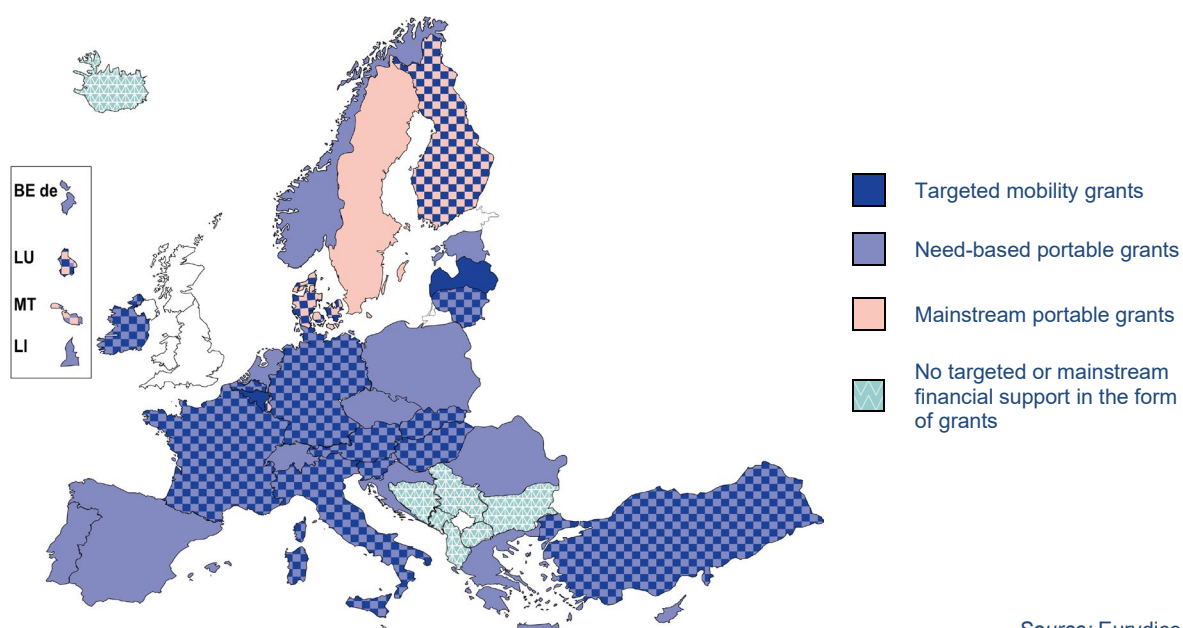
⁽⁷⁾ For more details on financial support, see Chapter 3, as well as the [National Student Fee and Support Systems in European Higher Education 2022/2023 | Eurydice \(europa.eu\)](#) (European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2023b).

mobility purposes, in addition to domestic support ⁽⁸⁾, and are defined, controlled and operated by national top-level authorities and funded or co-funded from national public sources. This means that basic Erasmus+ mobility grants are not within the scope of this indicator. Nevertheless, national top-up grants targeting disadvantaged learners are taken into account.

The second model is based on the so-called *mainstreaming approach*. According to this model, countries provide portable grants to the majority (more than 50%) of students (see Figure 3.1 for the proportion of students receiving grants). In this case, disadvantaged students are not targeted specifically (though the amount awarded might be determined on need-based criteria), but their support is ensured by the holistic approach towards grant provision. In other words, the logic behind this approach is that if all (or at least the majority of) students receive grants, grant provision is 'mainstream' and, consequently, the support of those in need is ensured without them being specifically targeted by education authorities.

Figure 4.3 illustrates the prevalence of these different forms of financial support in European education systems. In most cases, countries follow similar approaches in the first and second cycles; however, where these differ, the figure represents the financial support provided to first-cycle students.

Figure 4.3: Financial support in the form of public grants provided to disadvantaged students for learning mobility purposes, 2022/2023



Source: Eurydice.

As the figure shows, providing targeted support to students from low socio-economic backgrounds is far more widespread than the mainstreaming approach. In addition, of the two forms of targeted financial support, need-based portable grants are more common: they exist in 27 education systems. In 14 education systems, students from low socio-economic backgrounds or students with disabilities receive specific learning mobility support on top of their domestic need-based portable grants. In two education systems (Belgium – French Community and Latvia), disadvantaged students are primarily supported through targeted mobility grants.

⁽⁸⁾ The term 'domestic support' refers to financial support issued by authorities in the home country.

Sweden takes only the mainstreaming approach. Malta provides a combination of mainstream and need-based portable grants, while Denmark, Luxembourg and Finland make targeted mobility grants available on top of their mainstream portable grants.

Non-repayable financial support for learning mobility purposes is not available to students in seven education systems, predominantly in south-eastern Europe. These countries have neither targeted mobility grants, nor portable need-based grants. In these systems either their domestic grants are portable, but are primarily merit-based (as is the case of Montenegro), or their grants are not portable, irrespective of the awarding criteria (see also Chapter 3). There are no public grants in Iceland.

No education systems have reported changes in the area of financial support since 2018/2019. Norway, which had a percentage of grant beneficiaries close to 50%, now provides need-based grants to just below 50% of its students (see Chapter 3 as well as European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2023b). Spain has a new targeted grant programme for students with disabilities, where grants can also be used abroad (they are fully portable).

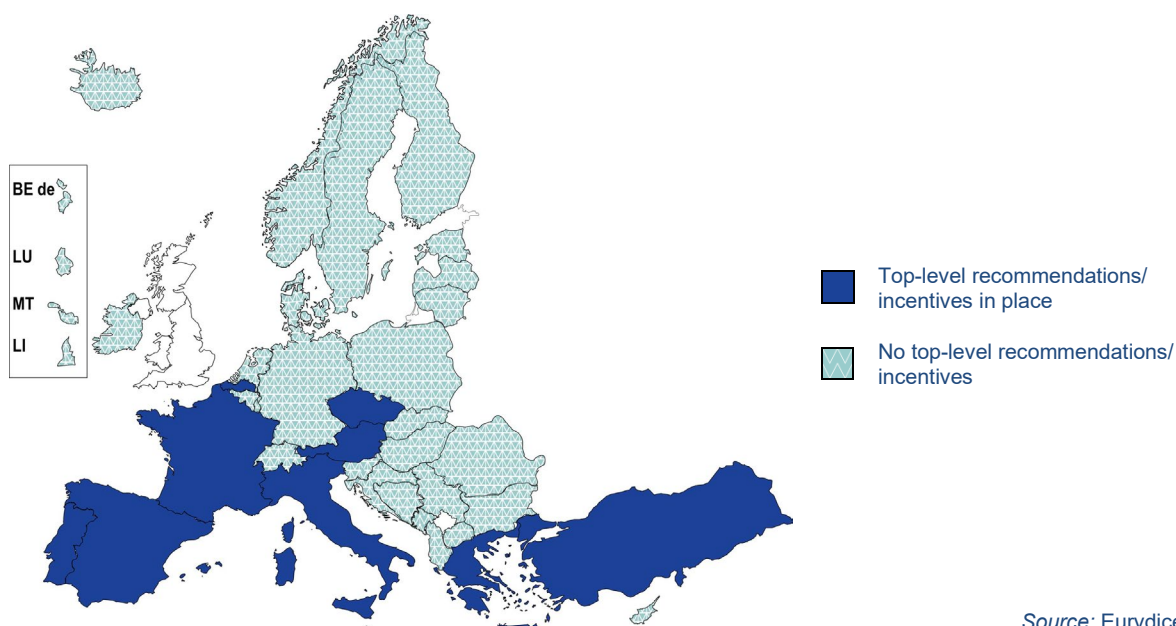
Top-level recommendations/incentives to higher education institutions

The last element of the scoreboard indicator is the presence of top-level recommendations or incentives for higher education institutions (HEIs) to introduce targeted measures to encourage more disadvantaged students to participate in learning mobility programmes. For example, top-level authorities may introduce performance-based funding (or other financial incentives) linked to the participation of disadvantaged learners in learning mobility programmes.

As Figure 4.4 shows, these kinds of top-level recommendations or incentives exist in nine education systems: Belgium (Flemish Community), Czechia, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Austria, Portugal and Türkiye. In Czechia and Portugal, these top-level policies were introduced recently. In Czechia, the 2021 Internationalisation Strategy promotes the participation of students with special needs and students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds in mobility programmes. In Portugal, the Equity and Inclusion Strategy of the Erasmus+ Education and Training National Agency, as well as the National Strategy for the Inclusion of People with Disabilities 2021–2025 also encourages the mobility participation of disadvantaged learners with additional information and monitoring.

Similar strategic documents exist in Greece and Austria. In Greece, according to the implementation guidelines of the Erasmus+ Inclusion and Diversity Strategy, higher education institutions are instructed to give priority to students with disabilities, to students with a low family income, to students from minority groups (Roma students, students from the Muslim Minority of Thrace), and with a migrant or refugee status. Such a broad focus on disadvantaged students is a new approach in Greece, where previously the policy focus was on students with disabilities. In Austria, the National Mobility and Internationalisation Strategy for Higher Education 2020–2030 includes recommendations on the development and implementation of targeted measures for improving the participation of under-represented groups in learning mobility, also in line with the 2017 National strategy on the social dimension in higher education. At the same time, in Slovenia, the previous strategic framework on internalisation expired in 2020, and the new framework and action plan have not yet been adopted.

Figure 4.4: Top-level recommendations/incentives to HEIs to introduce targeted measures to support the participation of disadvantaged learners in mobility programmes, 2022/2023



Source: Eurydice.

Besides strategies, education systems can also rely on other tools to promote the participation of disadvantaged students in mobility programmes. Conferences and publicity campaigns are used (in Belgium – Flemish Community), as are ministry circulars (in France). Financial incentives exist in Italy, where the proportion of disadvantaged students and students participating in learning mobility programmes are taken into account in the funding awarded to higher education institutions.

Some of the top-level recommendations concern only the participation of students with disabilities in mobility programmes. Two education systems (Belgium – Flemish Community and Türkiye) have prepared handbooks for higher education institutions on the special provisions made for students with disabilities with regard to learning mobility applications. In Belgium (Flemish Community), the 2015 Handbook on study and internships abroad includes one chapter dedicated to students with disabilities. A similar Handbook was also prepared by the Turkish National Agency in 2018, outlining the preferential treatment to be given to students with disabilities applying for places on learning mobility programmes. In Spain, national regulations establish that universities should promote the participation of students with disabilities in international mobility programmes, establishing the relevant quotas, guaranteeing sufficient funding in each case, as well as information and cooperation systems between the units that cater for these students ⁽⁹⁾.

4.3. Scoreboard indicator

Scoreboard indicator 4 also applies the five-category colour-coded scheme. A country should have all the four elements previously discussed to support the participation of disadvantaged students in learning mobility in order to be placed in the dark green category:

⁽⁹⁾ Article 18 of the Royal Decree 1791/2010 of December 30, approving the Statute of the University Student, <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2010-20147#a18>

1. long-term top-level quantitative objectives (see Figure 4.1);
2. comprehensive monitoring of participation rates (see Figure 4.2);
3. financial support, based on either the targeting or the mainstreaming model (see Figure 4.3);
4. recommendations and/or incentives to higher education institutions to implement targeted measures (see Figure 4.4).

Education systems with only three of the elements are placed in the light green category; those with two elements in the yellow, and with one element in the orange category. Education systems with none of the measures for disadvantaged learners identified by this indicator are in the red category.

Most elements of the scoreboard indicator require a specific focus on disadvantaged learners. While general policy measures may also enhance the participation of these groups of students in learning mobility (hence the inclusion of mainstream grants among financial support measures), given the vulnerable position of students from under-represented groups, this indicator aims to capture the presence of targeted policies in the education systems under analysis.

Regarding financial support, the proportion of students receiving support was only taken into account with respect to the mainstreaming model which required at least 50% of students to be receiving support. However, in the case of the targeted model, given the diverse economic and social situation of European countries, neither the proportion of students receiving support nor the amount given has been taken into account. Consequently, education systems with very different types of approach (from limited support given to a restricted number of students to widespread and generous levels of learning mobility support) are treated equally with respect to category placement (see Figure 3.1).

As Figure 4.5 shows, a complete range of measures to support the participation of disadvantaged learners in learning mobility is very rare. The majority of education systems are placed in the bottom categories, which highlights the need for improvement in this policy area.

Dark green: Only one education system falls into this category, Austria.

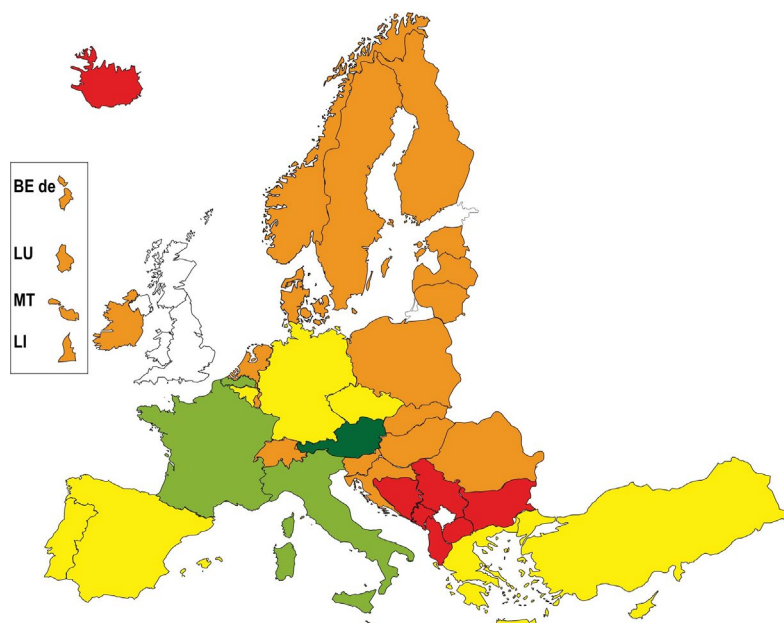
Light green: Only three education systems fall into this category: Belgium (Flemish Community), France and Italy. In all three systems, quantitative objectives are lacking.

Yellow: Eight education systems (Belgium – French Community, Czechia, Germany, Greece, Spain, Cyprus, Portugal and Türkiye) undertake two of the four measures. In Belgium (French Community), Germany and Cyprus, in addition to targeted financial support, comprehensive monitoring systems have been established; while in the other six education systems, financial support is complemented by top-level recommendations to higher education institutions.

Orange: Around half (20) of all participating education systems fall into this category. They provide financial learning mobility support to disadvantaged students, but they neither monitor the effect of this financial support on the participation of disadvantaged learners nor take any steps to encourage higher education institutions to promote the participation of students from under-represented groups in learning mobility programmes.

Red: Seven education systems do not support the participation of disadvantaged students in learning mobility by any of the means described above.

Figure 4.5: Scoreboard indicator 4: Measures to support the participation of disadvantaged learners in learning mobility, 2022/2023



Source: Eurydice.

Scoreboard indicator categories:

	The following measures are undertaken to increase the participation of disadvantaged learners in learning mobility: • long-term quantitative objectives on the participation of disadvantaged learners; • comprehensive monitoring of the participation of disadvantaged learners in mobility programmes; • financial support in the form of: ◦ targeted specific mobility grants OR ◦ portable need-based grants OR ◦ mainstream portable grants provided to more than 50% of students; • top-level recommendations/incentives to HEIs to implement targeted measures supporting the participation of disadvantaged students in mobility programmes.
	Three of the four types of measure are undertaken.
	Two of the four types of measure are undertaken.
	One of the four types of measure is undertaken.
	None of the four types of measure are undertaken.

4.4. The development of the scoreboard indicator over time

Disadvantaged students are less likely to participate in learning mobility programmes than their peers. Therefore, countries need to make specific efforts to facilitate the participation of these students. However, the analysis of changes over time reveals that little progress has been made in Europe in this respect.

This last section compares scoreboard indicator values between 2015/2016 and 2022/2023. However, given that the definition of Scoreboard indicator 4 changed between 2015/2016 and 2018/2019, in this case this can only be done in two separate steps. First, the evolution of the stable scoreboard indicator elements is analysed: these are the long-term quantitative objectives, comprehensive monitoring, and financial support (Figure 4.6.A). Second, changes between the 2018/2019 and the 2022/2023 scoreboard indicator values are examined (Figure 4.6.B).

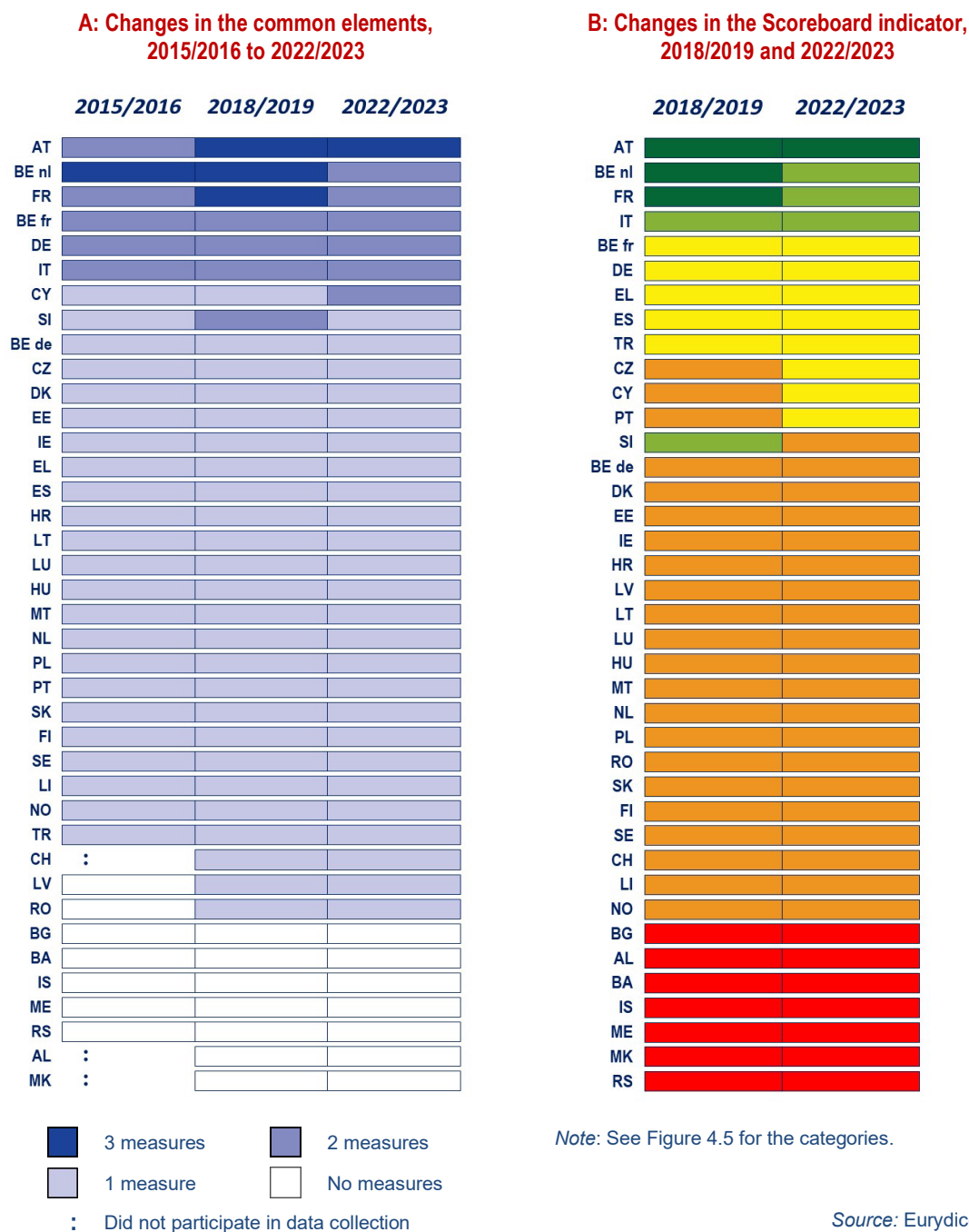
Figure 4.6: Scoreboard indicator 4: Changes over time, 2015/2016 to 2022/2023**Explanatory notes**

Figure 4.6.A is based on information on long-term quantitative objectives (Figure 4.1), comprehensive monitoring (Figure 4.2), and financial support (Figure 4.3). Figure 4.6.B is based on information from all elements of the scoreboard indicators (Figures 4.1 to 4.4).

Data are primarily sorted according to categories in 2022/2023.

Figure 4.6.A shows that the large majority of European countries have at least one measure supporting the participation of disadvantaged learners in mobility programmes. This measure is the availability of financial support, which mainly takes the form of portable need-based grants. However, the countries not having such financial support in 2015/2016 have rarely introduced it in later years: only Latvia and Romania made progress in this respect with the introduction of targeted mobility grants and portable need-based grants, respectively.

Very few education systems monitor the participation of disadvantaged learners in mobility programmes, and almost all of them have already done so in 2015/2016. Only Cyprus has introduced a comprehensive monitoring system in the analysed period. This means that the majority of countries do not have information on whether disadvantaged students are participating proportionally in relation to the general student population.

Setting long-term quantitative targets on the participation of disadvantaged learners is even more rare. There is no education system which had such a target throughout the entire analysed period. Belgium (Flemish Community) introduced a target the earliest, before 2015/2016, but this target is no longer valid, and the new strategic framework is still in preparation. France, Austria and Slovenia introduced their own long-term quantitative objectives before 2018/2019; however, the strategic framework for international mobility also expired in France and Slovenia, and so far, the two countries have not renewed their quantitative objectives.

When looking at the scoreboard indicator values overall, the extent of changes is similar. Most progress has been made concerning the new, fourth element of the scoreboard indicator: top-level recommendations/incentives provided for higher education institutions to implement targeted measures supporting the participation of disadvantaged students in mobility programmes. While no information was collected on such measures in 2015/2016, most of the current frameworks have been introduced afterwards. Besides Czechia and Portugal developing such top-level policies most recently, Greece has also widened the scope of its previous strategic framework. Nevertheless, it is still only less than a quarter of education systems encouraging its institutions to pay special attention to the mobility participation of disadvantaged learners.

Overall, while only ten education systems undertook at least two measures to increase the participation of disadvantaged learners in learning mobility in 2018/2019, the number of such education systems is now twelve. However, there has been a decrease in the number of countries in the two top categories (which might be temporary, depending on whether new strategic frameworks will be adopted); and there has been no progress among those not supporting disadvantaged learners at all. In most European countries, there is still a lack of clear political commitment towards facilitating the participation of disadvantaged learners in learning mobility.

CHAPTER 5: RECOGNITION OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

5.1. Introduction

Students planning or undertaking learning mobility experiences abroad need to be secure in the knowledge that the learning outcomes acquired during their study period abroad will be recognised back in their home country and elsewhere. Recognition is therefore a practice that must become automatic and fully effective if learning mobility and academic exchange are to become the cornerstones of European higher education. Failure to meet these recognition objectives will mean that all credit mobility, including Erasmus+ exchanges, will be undermined.

For these reasons, the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) was launched in 1989, within the Erasmus programme. It is intended to support the recognition of credits earned by students during their studies abroad so that they count towards their degree in their home institution. The ECTS is a credit system based on learning outcomes and student workload. Thanks to this approach, the ECTS has a central role in designing, measuring and evaluating learning outcomes, and it is now used not only for transferring credits between higher education institutions – in different countries or within the home country – but also for accumulating credits over time within institutions' degree programmes.

The ECTS is widely used around Europe, but not always in a consistent way. There is considerable variation in how workload and learning outcomes are combined (see e.g. European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2018, p. 54). The automatic recognition of credits, including within Erasmus+ credit mobility, is further hampered by administrative issues, for example, related to the use of ECTS documents or grading systems.

As part of the efforts to ensure a more consistent use of ECTS, a Users' Guide was published by the European Commission in 2015 (European Commission, 2015). It was adopted by the ministers responsible for higher education in Europe at the Yerevan Conference in May 2015 ⁽¹⁾, where the ministers and stakeholders in higher education recognised ECTS as a tool of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), and are therefore committed to using the system correctly. In 2018, EU ministers responsible for education also promised that by 2025, 'outcomes from learning periods abroad at higher education level in one Member State are automatically and fully recognised in the others, as agreed beforehand in a learning agreement and confirmed in the Transcript of Records, in line with the ECTS' ⁽²⁾.

The 2015 ECTS Users' Guide outlines the key features of ECTS and provides comprehensive conceptual and practical guidance on best practices to ensure that authorities, higher education institutions and other stakeholders implement ECTS consistently and effectively. This report focuses on the key elements identified in the Guide that are specifically related to the transfer of credits achieved during periods of study abroad.

⁽¹⁾ Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Yerevan, 14-15 May 2015.

⁽²⁾ Council Recommendation of 26 November 2018 on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad (2018/C 444/01).

5.2. Scoreboard data

ECTS is a system whose success depends on ensuring that there is a shared understanding of how it is applied in practice. However, this depends, to a great extent, on the actions of autonomous higher education institutions. There is therefore a potential risk that ECTS may be understood and applied in slightly different ways by different higher education institutions – and even in different parts of the same institution.

Top-level authorities have, however, the responsibility for encouraging and supporting institutions to use ECTS correctly. Legislative frameworks, training, guidance and other incentives are all commonly used for this purpose, but top-level evaluation and monitoring within an education system can also contribute to improving the quality of the implementation of ECTS. This type of monitoring is usually carried out by external quality assurance agencies for higher education. These agencies can assess to what extent ECTS is being used correctly and consistently across higher education institutions, and can identify any problems that need to be addressed. On this basis, advice for improvement can be given to the institutions concerned.

For this reason, Scoreboard indicator 5 examines whether external quality assurance agencies in higher education systematically evaluate the implementation of ECTS in the context of international credit mobility. As the recognition of learning outcomes through ECTS is the focus, the scoreboard indicator is limited to monitoring five key elements referred to in the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide (see Figures 5.3) which are specifically relevant for the transfer of credits during the international credit mobility process.

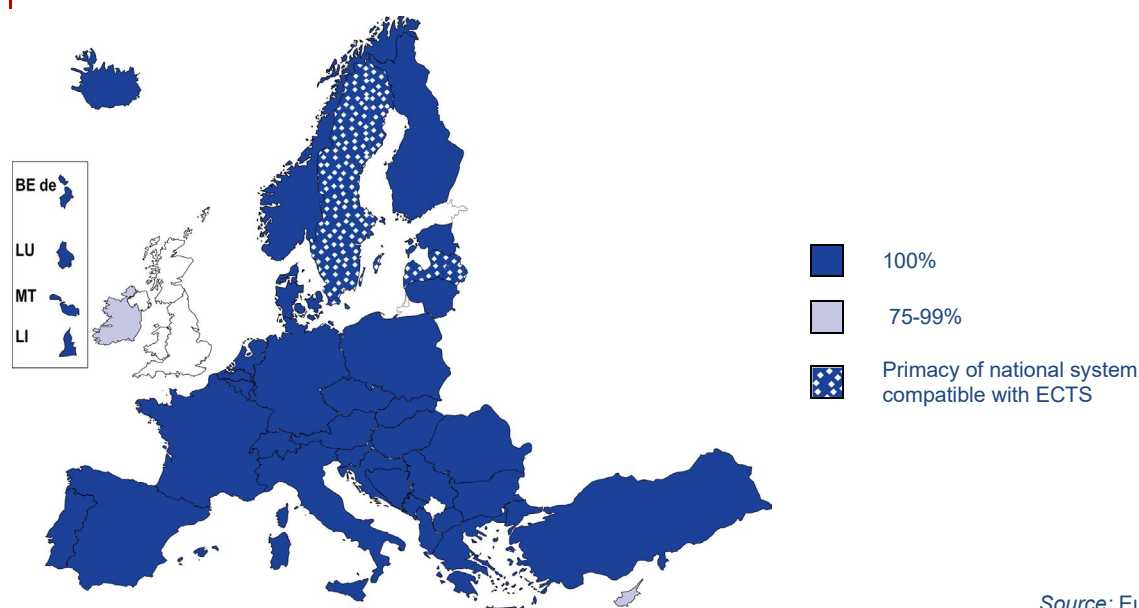
Shortly after the adoption of the ECTS Users' Guide in 2015, the 2016 Mobility Scoreboard (European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2016) first reported on whether ECTS was typically monitored during external quality assurance procedures. However, for the next edition of the Scoreboard (European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2020a), four years after the endorsement of the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide, it was already expected that top-level authorities had undertaken the responsibility for steering quality assurance practices and requiring explicitly that external quality assurance agencies monitor ECTS implementation. Therefore, the indicator was revised to show whether the five key elements identified in the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide were required to be considered during external higher education quality assurance procedures as the basis to assess ECTS implementation in higher education institutions in the context of international credit mobility. This year's edition of the Mobility Scoreboard follows this latter approach.

Current use of ECTS in higher education institutions

Figure 5.1 shows the percentage of higher education institutions using ECTS in the first and second cycles of higher education. With the exception of Ireland and Cyprus, in the countries that use ECTS, all higher education institutions report to use it in relation to first- and second-cycle programmes. There are, however, two countries (Latvia and Sweden) where ECTS is used in conjunction with a national credit system ⁽³⁾. Although these national and European systems may be sufficiently similar for credits to be converted easily, there may be aspects of the use of national credits which differ from the agreements on how ECTS should operate, and each of these systems will have differing degrees of ECTS compatibility.

⁽³⁾ In Latvia, according to the [Law on Higher Education institutions](#), ECTS will be used in higher education institutions from 2025.

Figure 5.1: Percentage of higher education institutions using ECTS, first- and second-cycle programmes, 2022/2023



Source: Eurydice.

Monitoring the implementation of ECTS

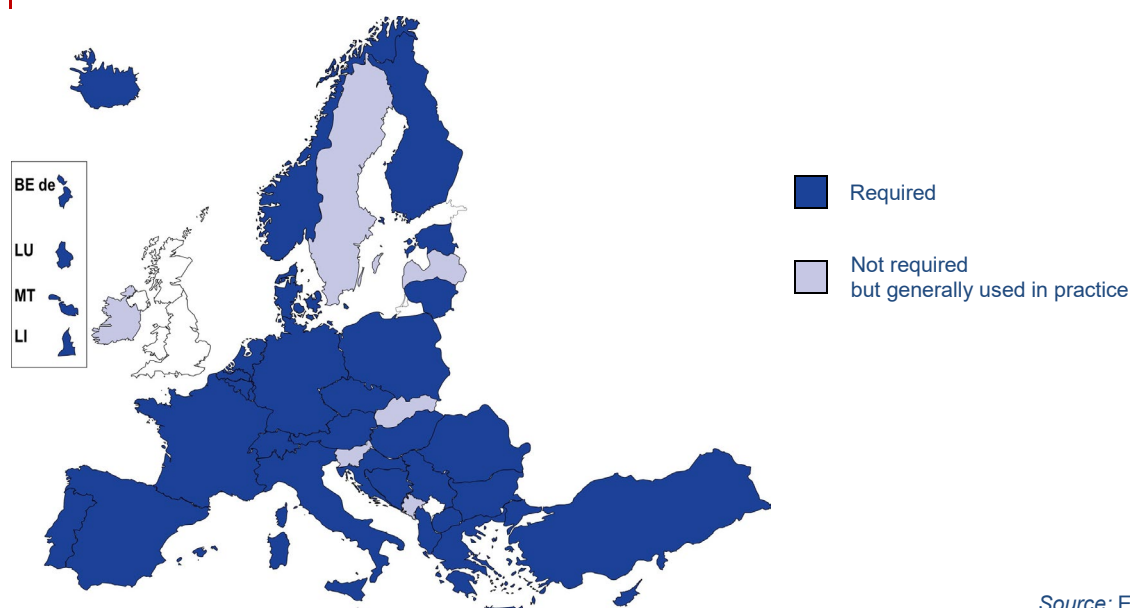
The figures that follow examine the existence of top-level monitoring of the implementation of ECTS through external quality assurance evaluations. If external quality assurance agencies are explicitly required to refer to key principles of the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide, this implies that all higher education institutions across the country will be evaluated consistently and given the correct advice.

This approach applies equally to the different types of quality assurance systems in European higher education – whether they focus on institutional or programme level quality assurance or combine the two. Institutional audits are increasingly used in national quality assurance systems. They evaluate the quality of how a higher education institution as a whole functions, and assess the extent to which the higher education institution's internal quality assurance system monitors key policy areas. External quality assurance that relies on programme level evaluation checks the quality of individual higher education programmes and their delivery within higher education institutions. This latter approach may carry certain risks. For example, programme accreditation may consider only the key elements of ECTS related to programme design, delivery and evaluation, and may neglect the specific issues of credit recognition, i.e. transferring credits from one higher education institution to another (within the home country or across national borders) as these elements are not considered a criterion in the programme accreditation process.

Therefore, in systems with institutional audits, it is expected that the institutions' internal quality assurance mechanisms take full account of the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide. That is, external quality assurance would not monitor ECTS implementation directly, but would check that the institution's internal quality assurance framework is sufficiently robust to ensure coherent implementation. However, in systems based on programme evaluation, external quality assurance would have a more direct role in monitoring the use of ECTS.

Figure 5.2 shows that in the overwhelming majority of education systems, the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide's principles are required to be used by external quality assurance agencies when assessing the quality of ECTS implementation.

Figure 5.2: Requirement for external quality assurance agencies to refer to the key principles of the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide when assessing ECTS implementation, 2022/2023



Source: Eurydice.

In six countries (Ireland, Latvia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden and Montenegro), reference to the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide's principles is not a requirement in external quality assurance, but the principles are generally used in practice. In some cases, this may mean that external quality assurance has not been aligned to the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide; it may also suggest that top-level authorities are less specific in directing their quality assurance systems to use the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide principles. While ECTS may still be evaluated in practice, these countries may miss an opportunity for gathering information on the current state of ECTS in higher education and effectively ensuring its appropriate use in their system. The lack of requirement to monitor ECTS in external quality assurance processes may also be due to the fact that ECTS is not used as a national credit system, and external quality assurance is required to monitor the use of this national credit system. This is the case in Latvia and Sweden. Nevertheless, the ECTS may be used in practice for international credit transfer and recognition.

Monitoring the key elements of ECTS in higher education learning mobility

ECTS is a credit transfer and accumulation system. It has a specific role in programme design and delivery, in credit recognition as well as in the recognition of prior learning and experience. External quality assurance procedures may be used to monitor these various dimensions of ECTS. Figures 5.3 and 5.4, however, focus on five of the key elements related to international credit mobility identified in the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide. Countries reported whether external quality assurance agencies are required to monitor these key elements:

- 1) ECTS credits are allocated on the basis of learning outcomes and student workload:

A common approach agreed in the EHEA is to link ECTS credits to both the learning outcomes (expected to be) achieved by the student by the end of the study period and the typical associated student workload⁽⁴⁾. The achievement of learning outcomes must be assessed.

⁽⁴⁾ The 2015 ECTS Users' Guide specifies that 60 ECTS credits are allocated to the learning outcomes and the associated workload of a full-time academic year or its equivalent.

In order to make the transfer of credits possible and trusted, all higher education institutions participating in credit mobility need to use this common language of ECTS credits. Different approaches to credit allocation – namely allocating credits based only on learning outcomes, or on student-teacher contact hours – may lead to unfair recognition practices, lengthy and resource-intensive procedures or eventually a deadlock for credit recognition.

- 2) ECTS supporting documents ⁽⁵⁾ (Course Catalogue, Learning Agreement, Transcript of Records, and Work Placement Certificate) are used appropriately:

ECTS supporting documents help facilitate credit recognition. They provide common templates for communicating about the educational components to be taken during credit mobility, and explain how student achievement will be translated into credits and recognised. The Learning Agreement, in addition, provides a prior guarantee to students that the credits they achieve abroad will be recognised in their degree. The appropriate use of these common templates contributes to transparency, quality and trust in the procedures of credit recognition.

- 3) All credits gained during a period of study abroad – as agreed in the Learning Agreement and confirmed by the Transcript of Records – are transferred without delay and count towards the student's degree without any additional work by or assessment of the student:

It is fair for a student to expect that all credits identified and agreed prior to the mobility experience, and which the student have successfully achieved and documented, will be automatically recognised and accumulated towards their home degree.

- 4) The higher education institution has an appropriate appeals procedure to deal with problems of credit recognition:

Student appeals procedures give students their rightful voice in the credit recognition process, and provide an opportunity to clarify any issues or remedy mistakes. This is an element of quality assurance in the credit recognition process.

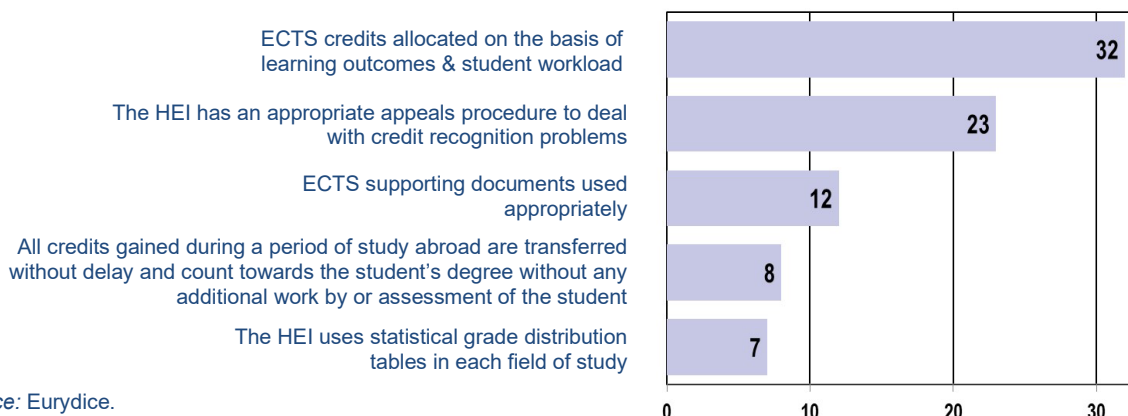
- 5) The higher education institution uses statistical grade distribution tables in each field of study:

Due to different cultural and academic traditions, different grading systems have been developed in European higher education systems and they are also used differently. Statistical grade distribution tables show how the national or institutional grading scale is used in the institution and allow for comparison with those of another institution. Using these tables guarantees that students are treated fairly and provides clarity on their grades when transferring credits. Transparency about grades is particularly important for students in countries where grades are taken into account for further studies and employment prospects.

Figures 5.3 and 5.4 only show the responses from the 33 higher education systems reporting that external quality assurance agencies are required to monitor ECTS implementation; they appear in the dark blue category in Figure 5.2. As Figure 5.3 shows, the first element (ECTS credits are awarded on the basis of learning outcomes and student workload) is monitored by external quality assurance in the large majority of higher education systems. This is of strategic importance, because learning outcomes and student workload serve as the basis of ECTS. It is an essential first step in the systematic monitoring of ECTS use. In fact, only one education system requiring the monitoring of ECTS implementation does not monitor this particular aspect of it (Albania).

⁽⁵⁾ See definitions in the Glossary.

Figure 5.3: Requirement to monitor the key elements of ECTS related to international learning mobility by external quality assurance agencies, by number of education systems, 2022/2023



Source: Eurydice.

The second key element, which is linked to whether higher education institutions have appropriate appeals procedures to deal with credit recognition problems, is still monitored by the majority of higher education systems, though not to the same extent as the first one. There has also been a slight increase in the number of countries reporting to monitor this element (23 in 2022/2023, while only 20 in 2018/2019).

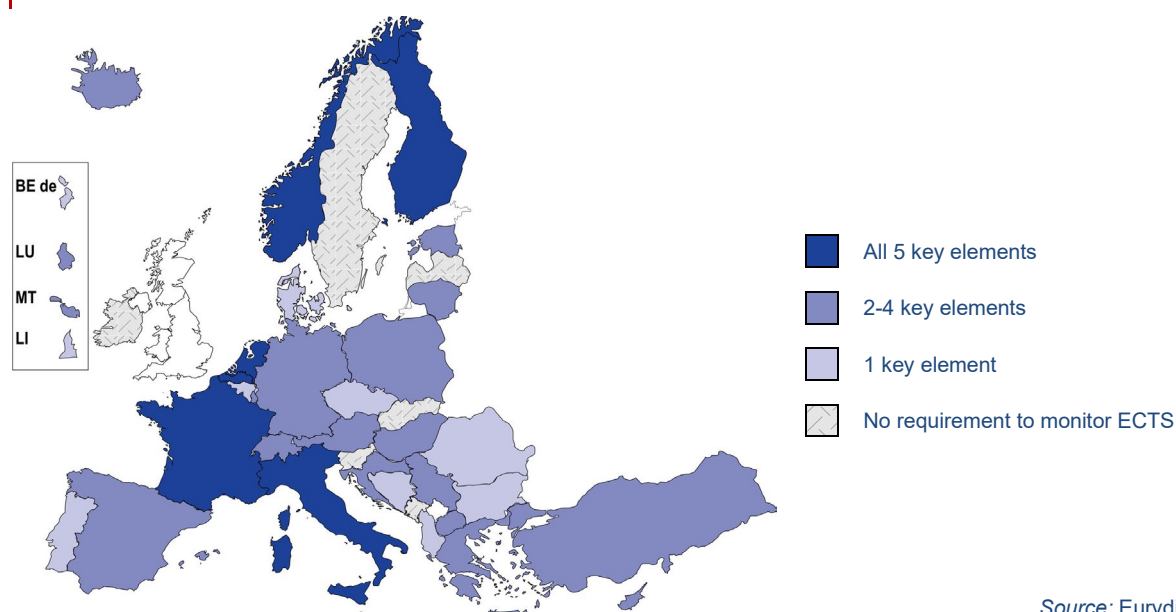
The remaining three elements are not very prominent in external quality assurance procedures across Europe: the use of ECTS supporting documents is monitored by twelve countries, automatic credit transfer by eight and the use of grade distribution tables by seven. Nevertheless, there have been small increases in the number of countries reporting that they monitor these aspects of ECTS implementation.

Figure 5.4 shows that relatively few higher education systems monitor all five elements during external quality assurance procedures – only Belgium (Flemish Community), France, Italy, the Netherlands, Finland and Norway.

Seventeen systems monitor two to four key elements. While there have not been many changes since 2018/2019 in this respect, five education systems have extended the scope of monitoring ECTS implementation. In Cyprus, in the context of institutional, departmental and programmatic evaluation and accreditation of higher education, the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA) now monitors whether higher education institutions have appropriate appeals procedures in general (not excluding appeals to deal with problems of credit recognition), and whether ECTS supporting documents are used appropriately. In Lithuania, the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (CQAHE) now monitors the conditions of credit recognition: whether ECTS supporting documents are used appropriately, and whether all credits gained during a period of study abroad are recognised. In Malta, the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA), established in 2021, is now responsible for monitoring whether ECTS supporting documents are being used appropriately, and collects data on grades, which are then analysed to create statistical grade distribution tables. Austria and Poland both started monitoring whether higher education institutions have the appropriate appeals procedures in place.

Some other countries also extended the scope of monitoring ECTS implementation recently, but without explicitly mentioning the analysed elements. For example, Belgium (French Community) and Switzerland now require that external quality assurance monitors how higher education institutions recognise the credits gained during students' mobility periods. However, no further details are specified within this monitoring requirement.

Figure 5.4: Requirement to monitor the key elements of ECTS related to international learning mobility by external quality assurance agencies, by number of principles, 2022/2023



Source: Eurydice.

Only one of the five listed elements is monitored in ten education systems. As mentioned above, this element is credit allocation on the basis of learning outcomes and student workload, except in Albania, where student appeals procedures are required to be monitored. There have been no policy changes in this regard, which also means that education systems that did not require the monitoring of ECTS implementation during external quality assurance procedure in 2018/2019 have not introduced this requirement.

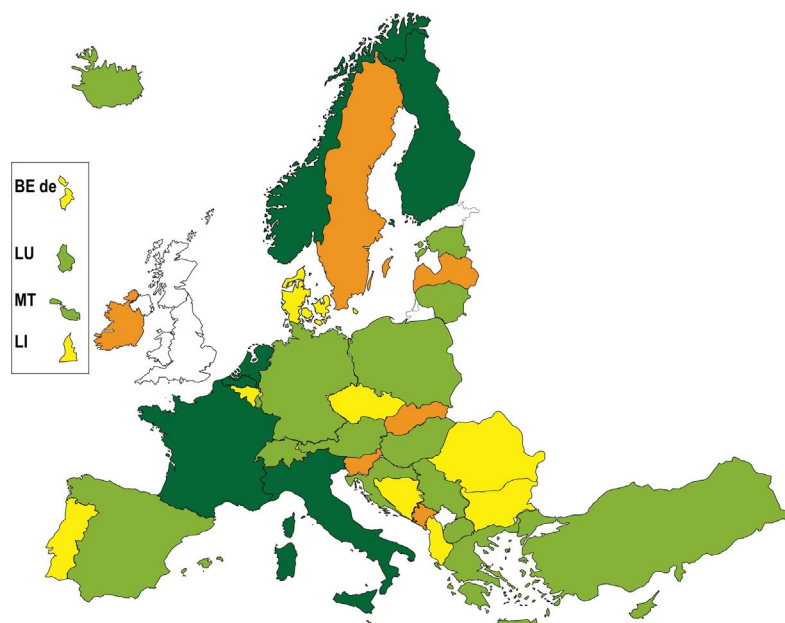
5.3. Scoreboard indicator

Scoreboard indicator 5 depicted on Figure 5.5 takes into account whether:

- 1) external quality assurance agencies are required to use the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide's key principles when monitoring ECTS implementation (see Figure 5.2);
- 2) there is a requirement to monitor all or some of the elements related to international learning mobility in the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide (see Figure 5.4).

The indicator is built on a five-category, colour-coded scheme where the first three categories (dark green, light green and yellow) indicate the education systems that require the use of the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide by external quality assurance agencies as the basis for assessing the implementation of ECTS in all higher education institutions. The last two categories (orange and red) refer to education systems where there are no requirements to use the principles of the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide, but orange signals that the ECTS principles are, nevertheless, generally used in practice; and red indicates that ECTS principles are neither required, nor used in practice.

Figure 5.5: Scoreboard indicator 5: Recognition of learning outcomes through ECTS in higher education, 2022/2023



Source: Eurydice.

Scoreboard indicator categories:

	The ECTS Users' Guide 2015 principles are required to be used by external quality assurance as a basis to assess the implementation of ECTS in higher education institutions in the context of international credit mobility. All five elements are monitored specifically: - ECTS credits are allocated on the basis of learning outcomes & student workload. - ECTS supporting documents (Course Catalogue, Learning Agreement, Transcript of Records, and Work Placement Certificate) are used appropriately. - All credits gained during a period of study abroad – as agreed in the Learning Agreement and confirmed by the Transcript of Records – are transferred without delay and count towards the student's degree without any additional work by or assessment of the student. - The HEI has an appropriate appeals procedure to deal with problems of credit recognition. - The HEI uses statistical grade distribution tables in each field of study.
	Between two and four of the five elements are monitored specifically.
	One of the five elements is monitored specifically.
	The ECTS Users' Guide 2015 principles are NOT required to be used by external quality assurance as a basis to assess the implementation of ECTS, BUT they are generally used in practice.
	The ECTS Users' Guide 2015 principles are NOT required to be used by external quality assurance as a basis to assess the implementation of ECTS, AND they are generally NOT used in practice.

Thirty-three higher education systems are in the first three categories: dark green, light green and yellow. In these systems, external quality assurance agencies are required to refer to some or all of the elements in the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide to monitor the use of ECTS in higher education. Top-level bodies in these systems take action to streamline the use of ECTS across the system, and gather evidence through the monitoring system to show how well the system is performing and what issues need to be addressed. The picture is rather mixed, however, when looking at the number of key elements monitored.

Dark green: Only the six systems in dark green (Belgium – Flemish Community, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Finland and Norway) monitor all five elements.

Light green: 17 systems monitor two to four key elements.

Yellow: Ten countries are beginning to monitor ECTS implementation for international mobility. They currently consider only one key aspect, which is usually credit allocation on the basis of learning outcomes and student workload.

Orange: In six countries, external quality assurance agencies are not required to use the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide's principles to assess how well ECTS is used in higher education institutions; however, they are generally used in practice. Some of these systems are less specific in directing their quality assurance systems to use the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide. Rather, they leave more autonomy to their higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies to determine what to assess. Alternatively, some countries in this category base their credits on a national credit system to which external quality assurance refers. These systems are all compatible with ECTS but do not follow the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide as the main reference.

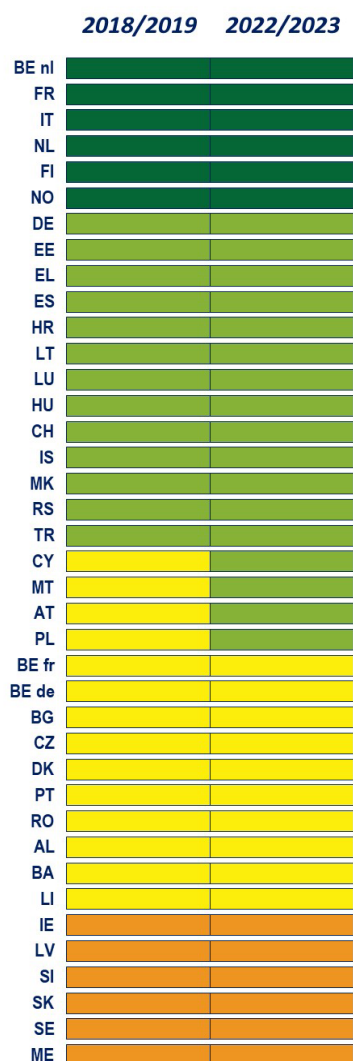
Red: There are no higher education systems in this category.

5.4. The development of the scoreboard indicator over time

The recognition of the learning outcomes achieved during periods of study abroad is essential for students participating in any short- or long-term mobility experience. ECTS was established to facilitate the transfer and recognition of credits from one country to another. Since its launch, ECTS has expanded across Europe, and it has contributed to improving transparency and simplifying the administration of the credit transfer process. The ambition is, however, that credit transfer under ECTS should become automatic throughout Europe. For this to happen, all higher education institutions in Europe should consistently apply learning outcomes and student workload as the basis of allocating and awarding credits, and they should universally make use of ECTS documentation and grade distribution tables. This ambition has not yet been achieved and students still face obstacles in gaining credit recognition, often due to the variations in its use across higher education institutions in Europe.

External quality assurance agencies are well-placed to assess the extent to which ECTS is being applied appropriately and effectively. It is for this reason that this chapter reports on requirements in this area. Figure 5.6 shows how the scoreboard indicator changed between 2018/2019 and 2022/2023 (as was mentioned above, comparisons with previous years are not possible due to the reliance on the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide).

**Figure 5.6: Scoreboard indicator 5:
Changes over time, 2018/2019 to 2022/2023**



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory notes

Education systems are sorted according to the colour-coded categories. See Figure 5.5 for the definition of categories.

As the figure shows, the large majority of European higher education systems require at least one of the key elements of ECTS identified in the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide to be assessed. However, no new education system has introduced this requirement since 2018/2019. In addition, only six systems require all five key elements to be assessed, and most systems consider far fewer. At the same time, five education systems have widened the range of aspects to be monitored since 2018/2019; for four systems, this is also reflected in a change of the scoreboard indicator category.

Almost all higher education systems with monitoring requirements address whether credit allocation is based on both learning outcomes and student workload in higher education institutions. This is important from the point of view of achieving the systemic implementation of ECTS. In contrast, the requirement for monitoring higher education institutions' grade distribution tables or the timeliness of the credit transfer process is rare in Europe. This suggests that automatic and fair credit recognition is not yet the focus of attention among top-level authorities.

CHAPTER 6: RECOGNITION OF QUALIFICATIONS

6.1. Introduction

One of the expectations of the Bologna process when it was launched in 1999 was that, by establishing convergent degree structures across Europe, learning mobility would become much easier and students would have access to higher education studies in other systems. A necessary condition for this to happen is not only that programmes are easily understandable, but also that qualifications are fully recognised.

Recognition of qualifications can potentially serve two purposes. The first is to enable access to the labour market – essential in a European Union based on the free movement of goods, capital, services and people.

The second purpose is to enable access to higher education in another country. The goal is for the qualification level to be automatically recognised allowing students to access the next level of programmes in all European countries. Thus, a first-cycle or bachelor's qualification should be recognised as a first-cycle or bachelor's degree everywhere without the need for separate recognition procedures. Similarly programmes that are acknowledged in one country at a specific level should be treated as such elsewhere. It is this second purpose of enabling access to higher education in another country that is relevant in the context of the Mobility Scoreboard.

After working over several years to establish and develop a European Higher Education Area (EHEA), higher education ministers in participating countries realised that, despite many positive developments, including the widespread development of transparency instruments such as the Diploma Supplement ⁽¹⁾ and both National and European Qualifications Frameworks ⁽²⁾ the process for the recognition of academic qualifications often remained lengthy and onerous. This is why, in 2012 in Bucharest, the ministers of higher education across the EHEA committed themselves to the long-term objective of 'automatic recognition' of comparable academic degrees ⁽³⁾. Within the European Union, the Council Recommendation of 26 November 2018 took a further step in promoting the automatic mutual recognition of qualifications as well as the recognition of learning outcomes during study periods abroad ⁽⁴⁾, thus strengthening the 2012 commitment and increasing the speed of implementation. Indeed, the Recommendation envisages achieving the automatic recognition of qualifications by 2025 throughout the EU, providing further impetus to all participating countries in the Bologna process to follow suit.

The automatic mutual recognition of a qualification is the right for the holder of a qualification of a certain level issued by one country to be considered for entry to a higher education programme at the next level in another, without having to go through any separate recognition procedure. This does not prejudice the right of a higher education institution or the competent authorities to set specific admission criteria for a specific programme. Neither does it interfere with the need to check if the qualification is authentic, or if it meets the requirements for accessing a specific higher education programme in the receiving country ⁽⁵⁾.

⁽¹⁾ For more details on the Diploma Supplement, see <https://europa.eu/europass/en/learn-europe/diploma-supplement>

⁽²⁾ For more details on the European Qualifications Framework, see <https://europa.eu/europass/en/europass-tools/european-qualifications-framework>

⁽³⁾ Making the Most of Our Potential: Consolidating the European Higher Education Area. Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Bucharest, 26-27 April 2012.

⁽⁴⁾ Council Recommendation of 26 November 2018 on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad, OJ C444/01 10.12.2018.

⁽⁵⁾ Ibid.

This definition makes it clear that automatic recognition does not imply automatic admission to any specific programme, but rather that the holders of a qualification giving a right of access to a programme of study at the next level should be considered for entry. In addition, one important clarification that follows from the legitimate right to verify the authenticity of a qualification is that automatic recognition does not imply an instantaneous outcome. Rather it means that the same process would apply to national qualifications as to those from other countries. As such, automatic recognition is a necessary pre-condition for, and facilitator of, large-scale degree mobility. Scoreboard indicator 6 therefore looks at the steps taken by European countries towards automatic recognition.

6.2. Scoreboard data

The scoreboard indicator on automatic recognition examines two main aspects of qualification recognition within the European Higher Education Area:

1. The extent to which there is automatic recognition of qualifications;
2. The existence of separate recognition procedures, and the conditions under which they operate.

These aspects are discussed in turn.

Automatic recognition

In education systems with comprehensive system-level automatic recognition, all higher education qualifications issued in all other EHEA countries are recognised on an equal basis with home country qualifications. This means that there are no separate recognition procedures in place for holders of foreign qualifications from other EHEA countries. Nevertheless, as explained previously in the introduction, automatic recognition does not equate to immediate recognition. A normal procedure would be to check that a qualification is genuine and classified at the correct level. These checks should in theory be relatively straightforward as ENIC/NARIC offices ⁽⁶⁾ are competent to address questions on specific qualifications.

A partial application of this system is when automatic recognition applies to a subset of European countries only, and separate recognition procedures are in place for qualifications from other countries. This may happen through bilateral or multilateral agreements between countries.

Finally, there is no automatic recognition when separate recognition procedures are in place for all higher education qualifications issued in other countries. In these systems, the holder of, for example, a first-cycle degree qualification from one European country cannot assume that the qualification will be recognised as a first-cycle degree in the destination country, and will have to wait for the outcome of the recognition procedure.

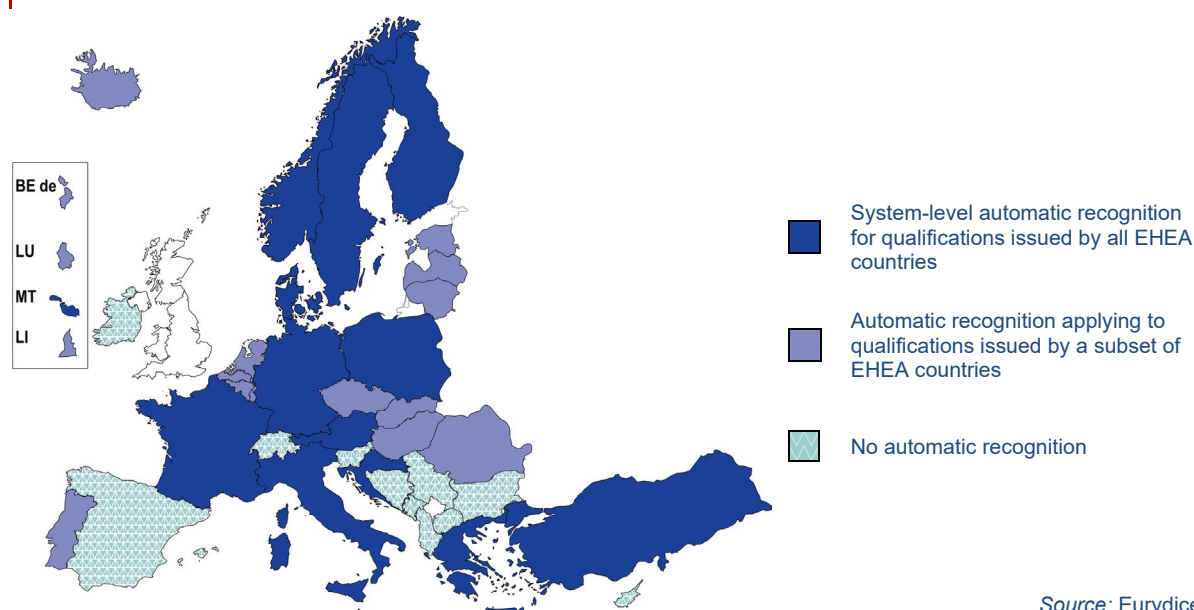
There are, however, situations where the boundaries of what can and cannot be considered as automatic are blurred, and further developmental work is needed. One of the widely acknowledged reasons for a lack of clarity is that decisions on recognition are most often left in the hands of the higher education institution to which the learner is applying. As institutional practices vary, it is often difficult to determine whether the recognition practice is in fact 'automatic'. One of the difficulties lies in the fact that although higher education institutions are responsible for making recognition decisions,

⁽⁶⁾ ENIC: European Network of Information Centres in the European Region; NARIC: National Academic Recognition Information Centres in the European Union. For more details on ENIC/NARIC, see <https://www.enic-naric.net/page-about-ENIC-NARIC-Networks>.

generally they have little interest in recognition decisions per se. Rather their main interest is in admission decisions, i.e., whether or not an applicant will be admitted to a particular programme. This means that recognition and admission processes are often conflated in these institutions.

Figure 6.1 identifies 13 education systems ⁽⁷⁾ that state that they have system level automatic recognition of degrees issued in all other EHEA countries. While automatic recognition was already in place in 2018/2019 in ten of these countries, Greece, Croatia and Austria have seen recent developments.

Figure 6.1: Automatic recognition of higher education qualifications from other EHEA countries, 2022/2023



Source: Eurydice.

In Greece, a new law came into force in July 2022. According to the law ⁽⁸⁾, there will no longer be any additional recognition procedures for higher education qualifications issued in all other EHEA countries. Nevertheless, the system depends upon the maintenance of two national registries, one of higher education institutions in all EHEA countries, and the other of the titles of academic qualifications. Provided that the body responsible for maintaining these registries has an accurate record of the institution and all qualification titles, recognition should be automatic, and higher education institutions will proceed with decisions on admission.

In Croatia, a new Act on Recognition and Assessment of Foreign Education Qualifications ⁽⁹⁾ that entered into force in June 2022 stipulates automatic recognition of qualifications in secondary and higher education for the purpose of continuing education. This Act is designed to align to the 2018 Council Recommendation on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad. The Agency for Science and Higher Education (including its constituent units relevant for recognition i.e. the National ENIC/NARIC centre and the Central Applications Office responsible for application to undergraduate and graduate Programmes) is explicitly mentioned in the Act.

⁽⁷⁾ Denmark, Germany, Greece, France, Croatia, Italy, Malta, Austria, Poland, Finland, Sweden, Norway and Türkiye.

⁽⁸⁾ [Law no. 4957/2022](#): New horizons in higher education institutions: Strengthening the quality, functionality and connection of higher education institutions with society and other provisions.

⁽⁹⁾ [Act on the Recognition and Assessment of Foreign Educational Qualifications, OG 69/2022](#) (Zakon o priznavanju i vrednovanju inozemnih obrazovnih kvalifikacija, NN 69/2022).

Finally in Austria, while legislation has not been fundamentally changed, clarifications have been made with regard to interpreting the legal provisions. These clarifications stipulate that the completion of a relevant Bachelor's or Master's programme enable direct access to a programme at the next level of studies. This is the case whether the programme has been completed at a recognised Austrian or EHEA institution.

Among this group of countries implementing automatic recognition at system level, Denmark, Greece and Norway are the only countries where higher education institutions have no responsibility for recognition decisions. In all the other countries, while the system is designed to ensure automatic recognition, the top-level authority devolves at least part of the responsibility for the implementation of recognition to higher education institutions. This means that problems may still arise from difficulties at the institutional level. Thus, even when the legal framework is in place, automatic recognition cannot be assumed.

While not yet having full system-level recognition for all EHEA countries, a further 15 systems report that they have automatic recognition for some European countries. This is usually based on regional, bilateral or multilateral agreements on the mutual automatic recognition of qualifications. In addition, Portugal and Romania operate an automatic recognition system that does not (yet) cover all EHEA countries. In Portugal, the list of countries whose qualifications fall under the automatic recognition procedure is expanding. In Romania, automatic recognition applies to degrees from all EU countries as well as to degrees issued by selected higher education institutions from EHEA and non-EHEA countries.

Bilateral, regional and multilateral agreements have stimulated progress in this policy area. Such agreements can be regarded as important steps towards the mutual automatic recognition of qualifications. However, although some agreements have been made on the basis of system-level automatic recognition, other bilateral agreements have focused on particular qualifications. A potential problem with this approach is that agreements may quickly become obsolete and in need of renegotiation if the system of degrees and qualifications changes in a partner country. For example, several bilateral agreements in force today were signed before the Bologna degree structure was implemented in signatory countries, which limits the applicability of these agreements and may even hamper automatic recognition.

Most recently, in 2021 the Baltic and Benelux countries entered into agreements on automatic and mutual recognition of higher education qualifications – effectively linking two existing regional agreements. Thanks to this new agreement, qualifications obtained in any of the six signatory countries can be used to pursue higher education degrees in another state covered by the agreement. In the future, any European Education Area member state will be able to join this agreement.

In 11 education systems, there is no automatic recognition and separate procedures apply to the qualifications issued by all EHEA countries.

Recognition procedures, and steps towards automatic recognition

To improve progress towards automatic recognition, a 'Pathfinder Group' was set up in 2012 within the framework of the Bologna process. Its report sets out the steps that need to be taken to help move systems forward on the path to automatic recognition (see EHEA Pathfinder Group on Automatic Recognition, 2014). These steps relate mostly to the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region⁽¹⁰⁾, more commonly known as the Lisbon

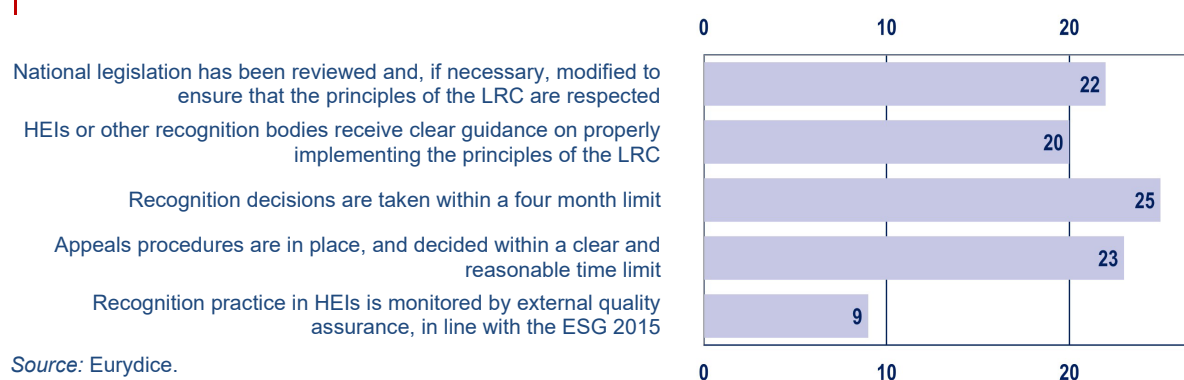
⁽¹⁰⁾ Council of Europe Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region, ETS No. 165, available at: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/165>

Recognition Convention. This Council of Europe/UNESCO convention provides a common and binding legal basis for recognition across European countries. With the exception of Greece, it has been ratified by all countries covered in this report. The set of measures outlined by the Pathfinder Group are intended to guide countries down the path towards automatic recognition by ensuring that the Lisbon Recognition Convention is fully implemented. The measures proposed are:

- national legislation has been reviewed and, if necessary, modified to ensure that the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) are respected;
- higher education institutions (HEIs) or other recognition bodies receive clear guidance on properly implementing the principles of the LRC;
- recognition decisions are taken within a four month limit;
- appeals procedures are in place, and decided within a clear and reasonable time limit;
- recognition practice in higher education institutions is monitored by external quality assurance, in line with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) 2015 ⁽¹¹⁾.

Figure 6.2 illustrates the steps taken by European countries towards the automatic recognition of qualifications. Consequently, the 13 countries with system-level automatic recognition already in place are not taken into account in this figure.

Figure 6.2: Steps taken towards the automatic recognition of qualifications in higher education, by number of education systems, 2021/2022



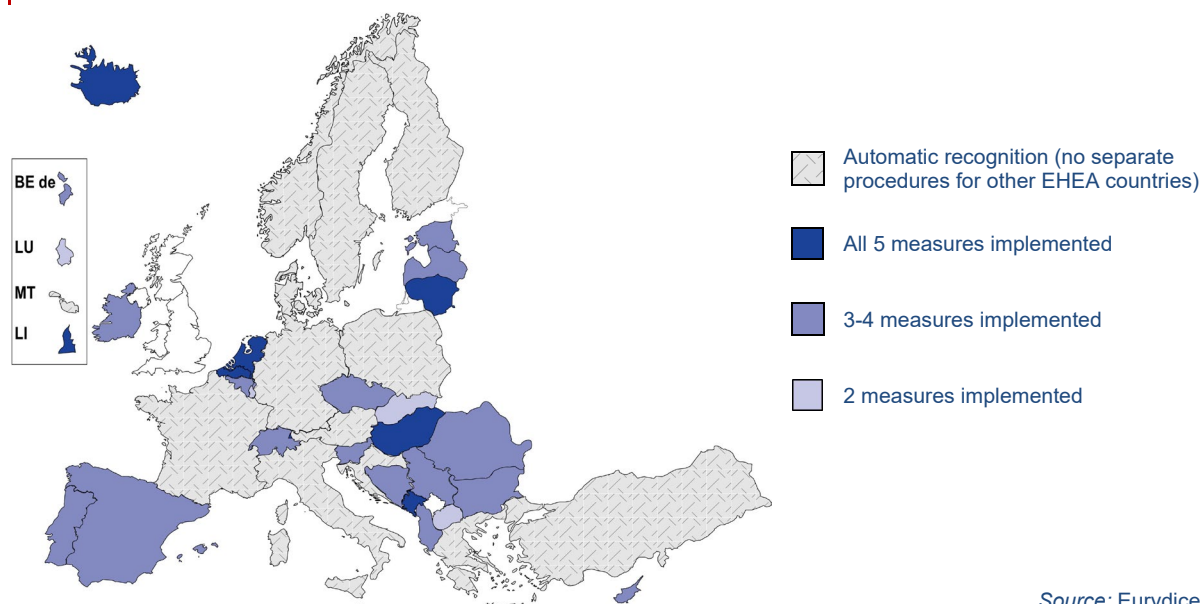
Of the 26 education systems covered by the figure, i.e., those without system-level automatic recognition for all EHEA qualifications, a large majority has implemented the first four of the listed measures. However, the fifth measure referring to the external monitoring of recognition practices within higher education institutions during quality assurance procedures is implemented in only ten education systems. This is particularly problematic given that higher education institutions often have the legal responsibility for recognition. Without an external monitoring process, there is a lack of accountability, and education authorities do not have access to information on how the recognition process is working.

The number of measures implemented by education systems ranges from two to all five (see Figure 6.3), as there are no longer any systems where none or only one of the measures is in place. In addition to the 13 systems that operate on the basis of system-level automatic recognition, seven

⁽¹¹⁾ Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), 2015. Available at: https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf [Accessed 12 September 2022].

education systems report that they have implemented all of the identified measures. The legal framework for recognition is therefore well advanced in these systems. A further 16 systems have implemented three or four measures. Another three education systems have two of the five measures in place.

Figure 6.3: Implementation of policy measures towards automatic recognition in higher education, 2022/2023



Source: Eurydice.

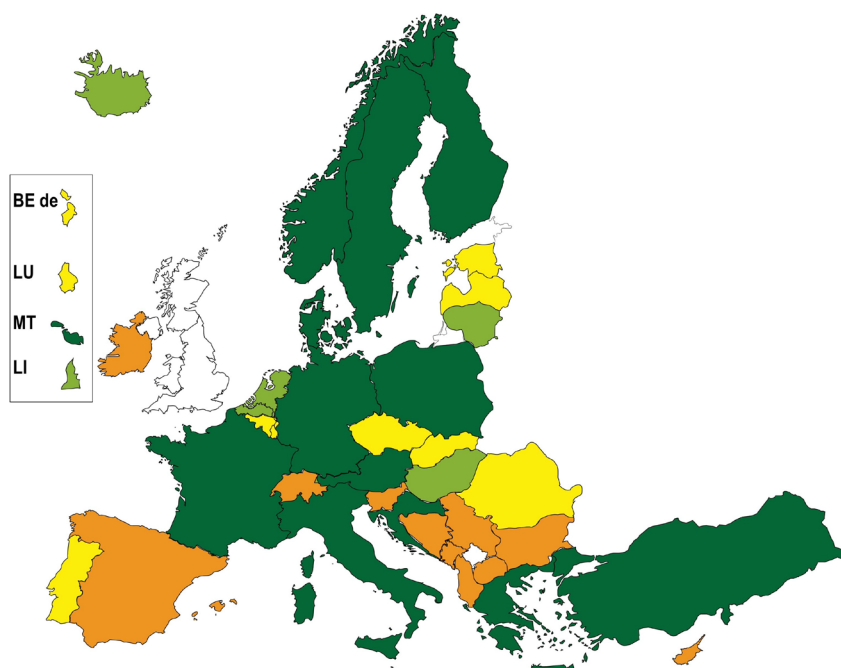
Countries that show improvement since the 2019 edition of the Mobility Scoreboard are Spain, Cyprus, Albania, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro and Serbia.

6.3. Scoreboard indicator

Scoreboard indicator 6 monitors progress towards the automatic recognition of qualifications based on Figures 6.1 and 6.3. Firstly, a distinction is made between the higher education systems based on whether they have implemented system-level automatic recognition of qualifications, and if they have, whether such automatic recognition covers all EHEA countries. Secondly, in the absence of automatic recognition with all EHEA countries, the indicator takes into account the conditions under which recognition procedures operate and the number of steps taken on the path towards automatic recognition.

In the first three categories, there is some automatic recognition of qualifications but there are differences either between the EHEA countries covered or the number of implemented policy measures steering the countries towards automatic recognition. The last two categories (orange and red) have no automatic recognition of qualifications but again they each differ in the number of steps taken towards this goal.

The indicator depicted in Figure 6.4 reveals that Europe is still far from achieving widespread automatic recognition.

Figure 6.4: Scoreboard indicator 6: Recognition of qualifications for learner mobility, 2022/2023

Source: Eurydice.

Scoreboard indicator categories:

	Automatic recognition is in place, meaning that all higher education qualifications issued in other EHEA countries are recognised at system level on an equal level with comparable ⁽¹²⁾ academic qualifications in the home country and give the right to be considered for entry to a programme of further study at the next level.
	Automatic recognition is in place for a subset of EHEA countries, meaning that all higher education qualifications issued in these countries are recognised at system level on an equal level with comparable academic qualifications in the home country and give the right to be considered for entry to a programme of further study at the next level. All of the following conditions apply to recognition practice: - National legislation has been reviewed and, if necessary, modified to ensure that the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) are respected. - Higher education institutions or recognition bodies receive clear guidance on properly implementing the principles of the LRC. - Recognition decisions are taken within a four month limit. - Appeals procedures are in place, and decided within a clear and reasonable time limit. - Recognition practice in HEIs is monitored by external quality assurance in line with the European Standards and Guidelines 2015.
	Automatic Recognition at system level takes place with a subset of European countries. For qualifications from other countries some but not all of the conditions apply to recognition practice.
	There is no automatic recognition. At least two of the conditions apply to recognition practice.
	There is no automatic recognition. Less than two of the conditions apply to recognition practice.

⁽¹²⁾ The term 'comparable' implies that foreign qualifications are treated in the same way as national degrees (e.g. a first-cycle degree from an EHEA country vs. a national first-cycle degree) for the purpose of further study at the next level without additional recognition procedures.

The distribution of education systems along the main categories is as follows:

Dark green: There are 13 systems (Denmark, Germany, Greece, France, Croatia, Italy, Malta, Austria, Poland, Finland, Sweden, Norway and Türkiye) that practise automatic recognition for all EHEA countries.

Light green: In a further six systems, automatic recognition applies to some EHEA countries. For recognition of qualifications from other systems, all the Lisbon Recognition Convention measures are in place.

Yellow: In nine systems automatic recognition applies to some EHEA countries. For recognition of qualifications from other systems, some but not all of the Lisbon Recognition Convention measures are in place.

Orange: Eleven systems are in the orange zone indicating that recognition is not (fully) automatic in their system. These systems have implemented at least two of the key measures of good practice in recognition.

Red: No countries are in this category. The category signifies no automatic recognition and fewer than two of the key recognition measures being implemented.

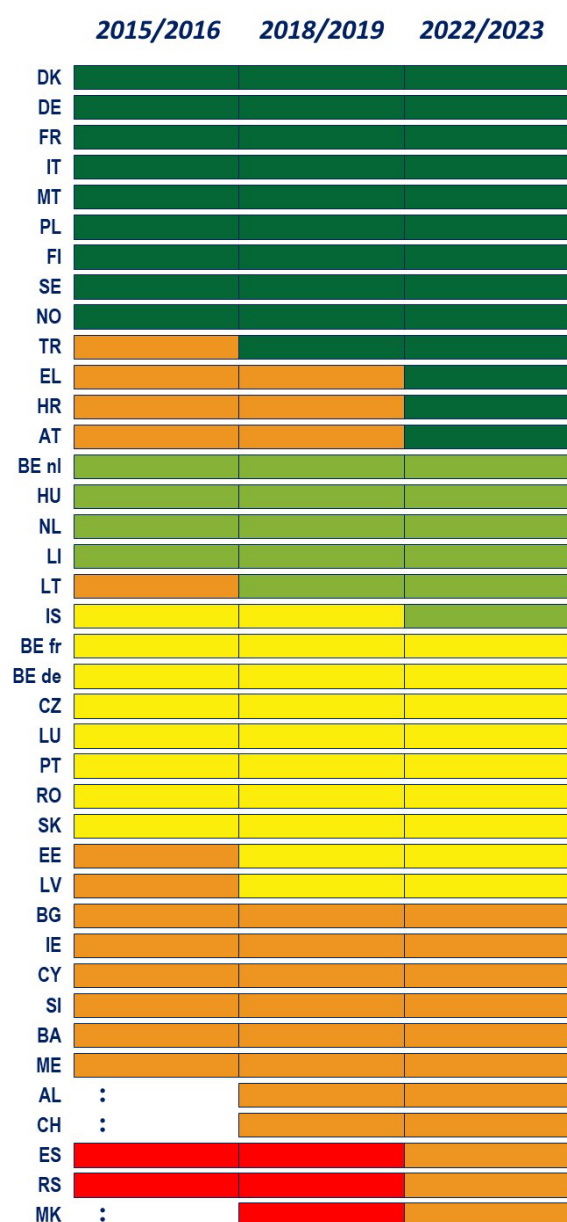
6.4. The development of the scoreboard indicator over time

Higher education cooperation in Europe during the last two decades has focused on improving and simplifying recognition practices. European higher education policy has worked towards easier recognition through promoting quality assurance aligned to common European standards and guidelines, transparency instruments such as qualifications frameworks and the Diploma Supplement, and the use of learning outcomes in higher education programmes. Qualifications can thus be easily understood and trusted. However, despite the overarching legal framework established by the Lisbon Recognition Convention, there are still obstacles to overcome and further action is required.

The focus of European policy in recent years has been increasingly on ‘automatic recognition’ of qualifications at system level. While three-quarters of the education systems covered in this report currently recognise the qualifications of at least some other EHEA countries automatically, only 13 do so for all EHEA countries. While it is encouraging to note that several countries report recent policy developments introducing the practice of automatic recognition, there is still some way to go before system-level automatic recognition can be considered as standard European practice.

Figure 6.5 shows that there has been relatively little change in this policy area considering the political attention that the topic has generated. Only four countries, Türkiye between 2015/2016 and 2018/2019, and Croatia, Greece and Austria between 2018/2019 and 2022/2023, have made legislative changes to introduce automatic recognition, despite the fact that this is encouraged by the 2018 Council Recommendation.

Figure 6.5: Scoreboard indicator 6: Changes over time, 2015/2016 to 2022/2023



Source: Eurydice.

: Did not participate in data collection

Explanatory notes

Education systems are primarily sorted according to the colour-coded categories in 2022/2023. See Figure 6.4 for the definition of categories.

More significant developments towards automatic recognition have taken place in a regional context, with the Baltic and Benelux countries linking two existing regional automatic and mutual recognition agreements in 2021. While the impact of this development is not visible on the indicator, it marks an increase in the coverage of qualifications eligible for automatic recognition.

In addition, there have been improvements in the steps towards automatic recognition in other countries. Iceland moved closer to comprehensive system-level automatic recognition between 2018/2019 and 2022/2023 while Spain, North Macedonia and Serbia improved their approach to recognition during this period.

Although only a small number of countries have signalled recent progress, the general trend is positive and there has clearly been an impact of the 2018 Council Recommendation on EU countries. More than two-thirds of the higher education systems now apply system-level automatic recognition processes for at least some qualifications from other European countries.

It is also important to signal that there are no longer any countries in the red category where there is no automatic recognition and fewer than two of the key principles of good recognition practice are applied.

Despite the general positive trend, there remain 17 systems yet to have a comprehensive approach to automatic recognition where no change has been made since 2015/2016. Most countries still have significant progress to make to meet their political commitment towards system-level automatic recognition for all qualifications.

CONCLUSION

Following the 2011 Recommendation of the Council of the European Union on learning mobility for young people ⁽¹⁾, the European Commission – in close cooperation with the Member States – set up a framework to monitor the progress made in developing and implementing policies favourable to learning mobility and in removing the obstacles hindering participation. This report provides the third and last mapping of the policy environment surrounding international mobility for higher education students based on this monitoring framework, the Mobility Scoreboard ⁽²⁾. Currently, the European learning mobility policy framework is being redefined, which provides momentum for looking back to the period following the 2011 Recommendation and evaluate the progress made by European countries in the different policy areas.

The higher education Mobility Scoreboard includes six composite indicators, corresponding to the six main chapters of the report: information and guidance, foreign language preparation, portability of grants and loans, participation of disadvantaged learners, recognition of learning outcomes and recognition of qualifications. Each scoreboard indicator is made up of five colour-coded categories reflecting performance in each policy area.

The scoreboard indicators reveal the wide range of situations facing higher education students across Europe when they embark upon international mobility experiences. This is apparent from the varied distribution of countries between the colour-coded categories, from the top category – dark green – indicating that all the desired policy criteria are in place, to the bottom category – red – indicating that none of them are (see Figure A).

There are issues to consider and areas to improve in all countries as no education system complies fully with all criteria in every indicator. However, some countries perform better than others. France, for example, has maintained its position of being consistently placed within the two highest categories throughout the period covered by the Mobility Scoreboard – from 2015/2016 to 2022/2023. Belgium (German-speaking and Flemish Communities), Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria, Finland and Norway all perform relatively well overall. These systems are distinguished by the fact that they are placed in the dark green category for at least two indicators, never in the red category, and in the orange for one indicator at most.

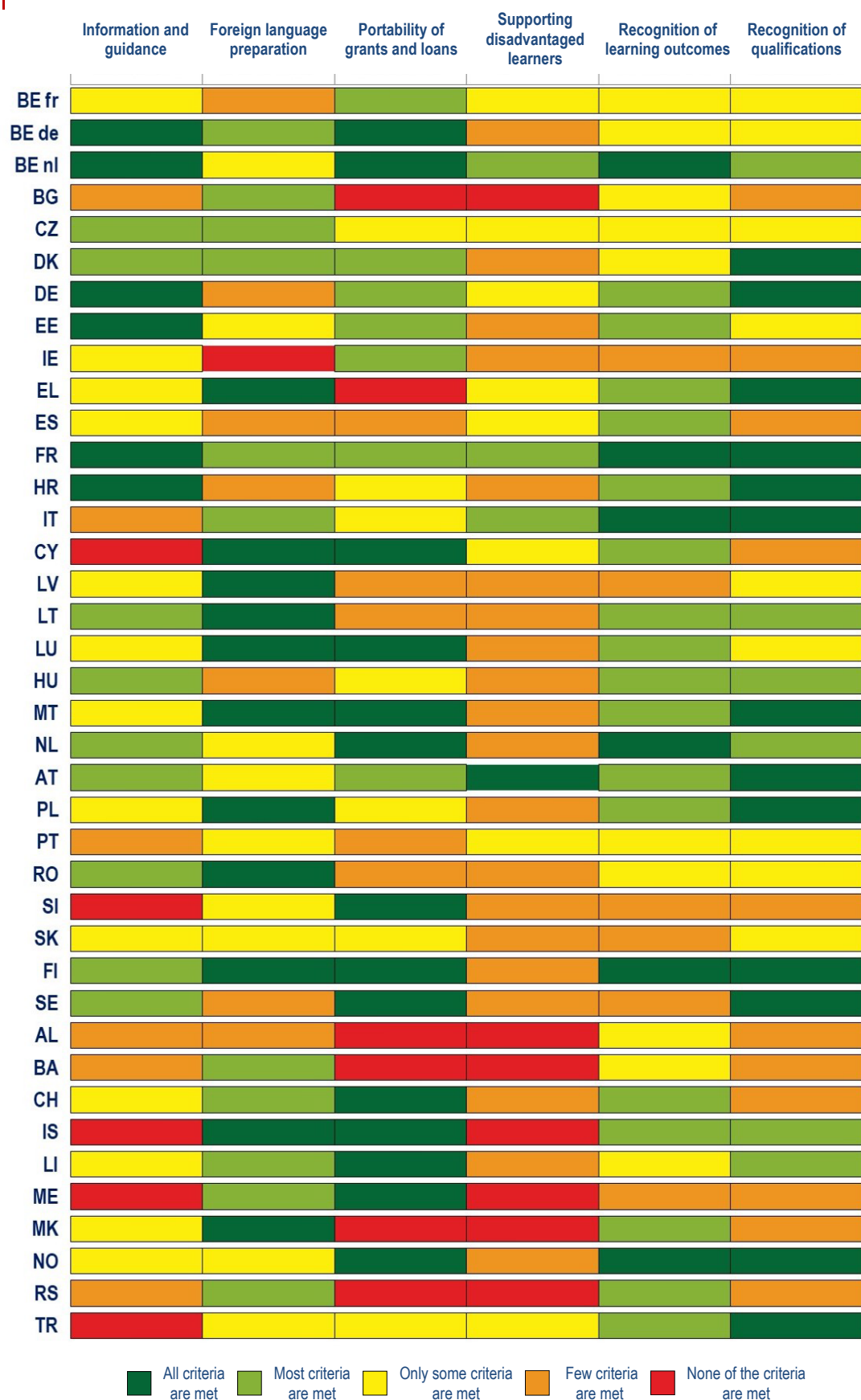
At the other end of the spectrum, the overall performance of Bulgaria, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia suggests a need for further policy development. Though each system performs relatively well on one or two indicators, they are currently in the lowest (red) category for two indicators, and never in the dark green category.

Some countries showed more substantial progress than others in the analysed period. Cyprus, Latvia and Austria adopted new policy measures and improved their performance in three policy areas. The list of countries changing position towards higher categories in two different areas include Belgium (French Community), Estonia, Greece, Croatia, Lithuania, Malta, North Macedonia, Norway and Serbia.

⁽¹⁾ Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on 'Youth on the move' – promoting the learning mobility of young people, OJ C199, 7.7.2011.

⁽²⁾ The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) has undertaken complementary activities, namely the monitoring of measures promoting mobility in initial vocational education and training (VET).

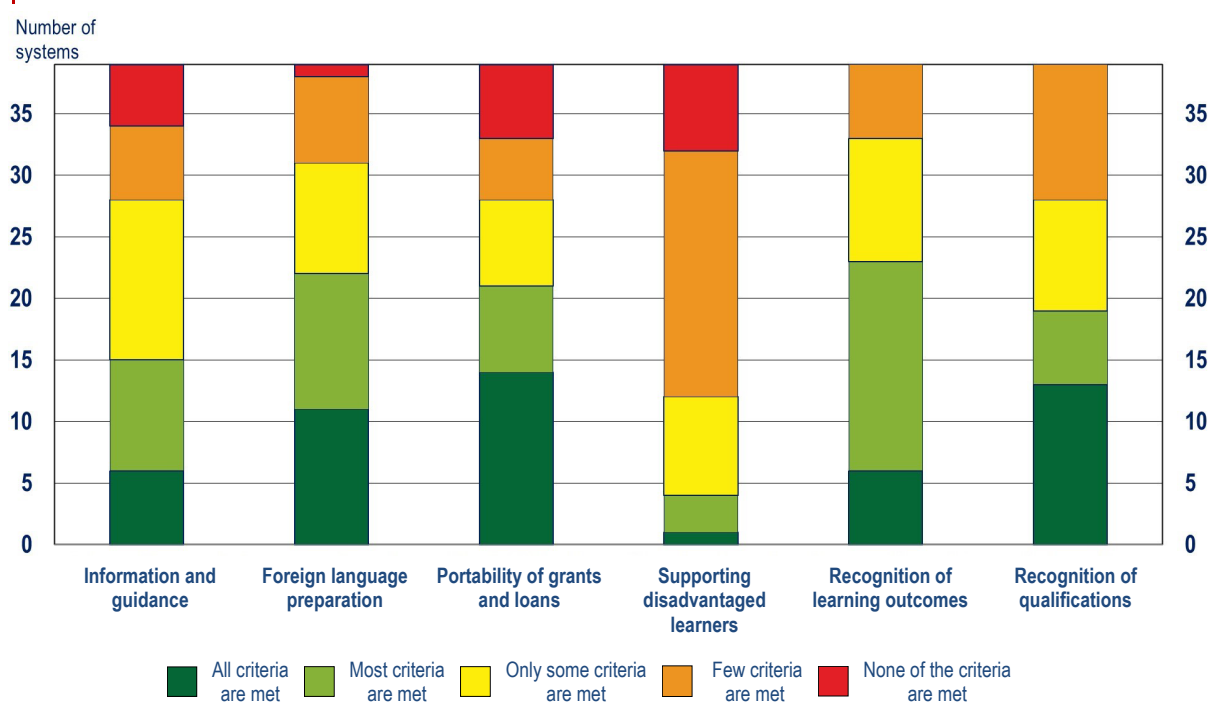
Figure A: Mobility Scoreboard indicators in higher education, 2022/2023



Source: Eurydice.

Together with Figure A, Figure B illustrates the overall performance of European countries by policy area. The figure shows that education systems fare relatively well on the indicators on foreign language preparation and the recognition of learning outcomes through ECTS. For these two indicators, more than half of the education systems are in the top two (dark and light green) categories, while the number of systems in the last two (red and orange) categories is the lowest among all indicators. For the indicator on foreign language preparation, there is only one country in the red category (and that is placed there due to its exceptional circumstances ⁽³⁾), and no education system is in this bottom category for the recognition of learning outcomes through ECTS.

Figure B: Overall performance of European countries by scoreboard indicator, 2022/2023



Source: Eurydice.

The picture is also rather positive when it comes to the indicators on portability of student support and the automatic recognition of qualifications. In the case of these two indicators, the highest number of systems can be found in the dark green category, indicating full compliance with all policy criteria. For the indicator on portability of student support, around half of the systems are in the top two categories, but still more than a quarter of education systems are underperforming, being placed in the orange and red categories. For the indicator on automatic recognition, there is a relatively even distribution of systems along the first four categories, while no education system falls in the last, red category.

The area of information and guidance is the field where most education systems have put policies in place, but only few meet all defined criteria. Hence, education systems crowd towards the middle: one third of education systems are in the yellow category.

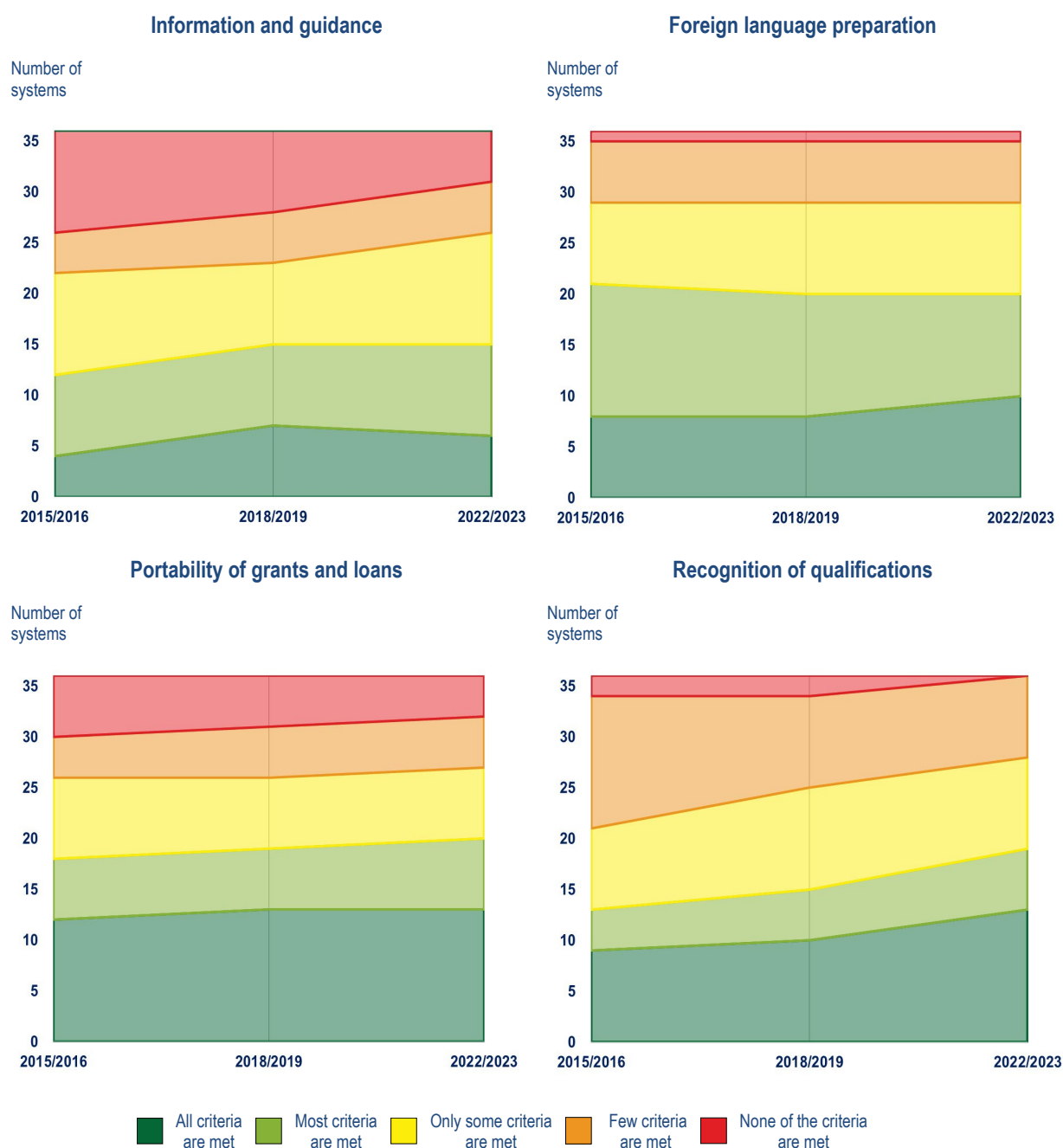
The indicator on supporting the participation of disadvantaged learners reveals the greatest need for progress among the six indicators. For this indicator, the large majority of education systems are in the orange and red categories, and only four of them fall in the top two. This means that most education

⁽³⁾ In Ireland, neither Irish nor English are considered as foreign languages. It is mandatory for all students to learn these two official languages, but according to our definitions there is no compulsory foreign language teaching.

systems, while providing some form of targeted financial support, do not have the strategic goal of increasing the participation of disadvantaged learners in mobility programmes.

Policy areas also show different dynamics when it comes to the progress made between 2015/2016 and 2022/2023. Figure C illustrates overall changes within the four policy areas where data are available for the whole period.

Figure C: Overall changes between 2015/2016 and 2022/2023 by policy area



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory note

The figure only includes the 36 education systems with data available for all three reference years (excluding Albania, Switzerland and North Macedonia).

The indicators on foreign language preparation and the recognition of learning outcomes through ECTS, which show the most positive picture overall, saw very few category changes over this period, though all towards higher categories ⁽⁴⁾. At the same time, changes not detected by differences between indicator categories were more common, which show a slow but steady lengthening of language learning periods as well as small steps towards the full use of the European Commission's ECTS Users' Guide (European Commission, 2015). Given that the red category is nearly empty for these two composite indicators, a revision of the indicator categories can be envisaged in the future, to be able to show smaller steps towards full compliance.

The indicators on portability of student support and the automatic recognition of qualifications, with still a relatively positive overall balance, show very different dynamics over the years. The portability of grants and loans is the most static policy area in relation to learning mobility in higher education, with only three systems introducing significant improvements within the analysed period. Education systems not providing portable support have not made steps towards removing this obstacle to learning mobility.

In contrast, the automatic recognition of qualifications is a relatively more dynamic policy area, with around a quarter of education systems moving up their category since 2015/2016. While only four countries made legislative changes to introduce automatic recognition in the analysed period, several regional automatic mutual recognition agreements were signed, and implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention improved across Europe. Nevertheless, despite previously held assumptions, the implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention did not prove to be a stepping stone towards automatic recognition. The introduction of system-level automatic recognition – for qualifications across the EHEA or within specific regions – is not necessarily preceded by the incremental implementation of this agreement. Therefore, the indicator could be revised in the future monitoring framework to take account of this reality.

Information and guidance provision is the policy area where most changes took place. More than one third of education systems changed their category between 2015/2016 and 2022/2023, and most towards higher categories. The changes were most often incremental, introducing one additional policy measure. These changes indicate clear progress over the period, even if the overall distribution of countries along the five categories still reveals a lack of systematic attention on information and guidance provision.

Finally, the indicator on supporting the participation of disadvantaged learners, which reveals the greatest need for progress, has also proved to be relatively unstable in terms of the direction of policy change. Changes were relatively infrequent and did not always move in the direction of higher categories. Policy measures have been typically introduced through top-level internationalisation strategies, and when such a strategy has come to an end, it has not necessarily been renewed. While such drops may be temporary, they nevertheless signal a lack of systematic attention on supporting disadvantaged learners.

Overall, for most countries learning mobility has not been a dynamic policy area during the 8 years covered by the Mobility Scoreboard. Although most changes have been positive, leading to improvement in the indicators, the overall picture remains rather static, and indeed around a third of European education systems are in a very similar situation today as they were in 2015/2016. This means that top-level authorities could still make better use of common European legal instruments, tools and agreements, such as the Council Recommendation on promoting automatic mutual

⁽⁴⁾ Data for Scoreboard indicator 5 on the recognition of learning outcomes is only available from 2018/2019 due to the introduction of the ECTS Users' Guide only in 2015. See Chapter 5 for details.

recognition ⁽⁵⁾, qualifications frameworks or ECTS supporting documents to improve transparency and develop trust between education systems. In addition, higher education institutions have substantial autonomy in policy areas in several areas of the Scoreboard. However, systematic top-level monitoring of personalised information and guidance services, the participation of disadvantaged learners in learning mobility, ECTS implementation, or higher education institutions' recognition practices is often lacking in European education systems. Improved monitoring could provide the valuable information required by policy-makers to tackle the obstacles students face concerning learning mobility, as well as to improve the quality of learning mobility.

⁽⁵⁾ Council Recommendation of 26 November 2018 on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad, OJ C444/01 10.12.2018.

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GLOSSARY

Automatic recognition of qualifications: the right of holders of a qualification of a certain level issued by one country to be considered for entry to a higher education programme at the next level in another country, without having to go through any separate recognition procedure. This does not prejudice the right of a higher education institution or the competent authorities to set specific evaluation and admission criteria for a specific programme. Neither does it prejudice the right to check, if the qualification is authentic ⁽¹⁾.

Compulsory foreign language learning: a foreign language is compulsory when it is taught as one of the compulsory subjects in the curriculum laid down by top-level education authorities. All pupils must study this subject. The total length of compulsory foreign language teaching is calculated from the beginning of pre-primary education until the end of upper secondary education (ISCED 0 to 3). In most countries, this period goes beyond the end of compulsory education. In these cases, foreign language teaching is nevertheless regarded as 'compulsory' if it is required for all participating pupils.

Course Catalogue: 'the Course Catalogue includes detailed, user-friendly and up-to-date information on the institution's learning environment (general information on the institution, its resources and services, as well as academic information on its programmes and individual education components) that should be available to students before entering and throughout their studies to help them to make the right choices and use their time most efficiently. The Course Catalogue should be published on the institution's website, indicating the course/subject titles in the national language (or regional language, if relevant) and in English, so that all interested parties can easily access it. The institution is free to decide the format of the Catalogue, as well as the sequencing of the information, but it should be published sufficiently in advance for prospective students to make their choices' (European Commission 2015, p. 67).

Credit mobility: a short period of tertiary education and/or study-related traineeship abroad, within the framework of a tertiary education programme at a 'home institution', usually for gaining academic credits (i.e. credits that will be recognised in the home institution).

Credit transfer: 'the process of having credits awarded in one context (programme, institution) recognised in another formal context for the purpose of obtaining a qualification. Credits awarded to students in one programme may be transferred from an institution to be accumulated in another programme offered by the same or another institution. Credit transfer is the key to successful mobility. Institutions, faculties, departments may make agreements which guarantee automatic recognition and transfer of credits' (European Commission 2015, p. 68).

Degree mobility: whole-programme mobility where the student physically moves abroad for an entire degree course leading to a tertiary-level qualification.

Disadvantaged learners: learners who have hindrances to learning or performing well at school because of unfavourable circumstances beyond their control. These include financial and social hardships as well as difficulties arising from disabilities. These groups are often under-represented in higher education.

Domestic student support: financial support (grants and loans) provided to students by authorities in the home country.

⁽¹⁾ Council Recommendation of 26 November 2018 on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad, OJ C444/01 10.12.2018.

European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS): ‘a learner-centred system for credit accumulation and transfer, based on the principle of transparency of the learning, teaching and assessment processes. Its objective is to facilitate the planning, delivery and evaluation of study programmes and student mobility by recognising learning achievements and qualifications and periods of learning’ (European Commission 2015, p. 69).

ECTS supporting documents: ‘the use of ECTS credits is facilitated and quality enhanced by the supporting documents. These are the Course Catalogue, Learning Agreement, Transcript of Records, and Work Placement Certificate’ (European Commission 2015, p. 12).

European Higher Education Area (EHEA): officially launched during the Budapest-Vienna Ministerial Conference in 2010 to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Bologna Declaration, the EHEA was the culmination of a decade of work to implement the Bologna Process. This process was intended to ensure more comparable, compatible and coherent systems of higher education in Europe. It currently covers 48 states. For more information, visit: <http://www.ehea.info/>.

European Standards and Guidelines: refers to the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), adopted by the Ministers responsible for higher education in the European Higher Education Area in May 2015. Available at: http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/ESG/00/2/ESG_2015_616002.pdf.

External quality assurance: the process of evaluation or audit of a higher education programme or institution undertaken by a specialised body outside the institution. Typically the body may be a quality assurance or accreditation agency, or an ad hoc panel of experts and peers constituted by the responsible Ministry. The evaluation will involve the collection of data, information and evidence for assessment against agreed standards.

Foreign language: a language designated as ‘foreign’ (or ‘modern’) in the curriculum laid down by the central (or top-level) education authorities. This definition is an educationally based one and unrelated to the political status of languages. Thus certain languages regarded as regional or minority languages from a political perspective may be included in the curriculum as foreign languages. In the same way, certain ancient languages may be considered foreign languages in certain curricula.

Grade distribution tables: ‘show how the existing national or institutional scale is being used in the institution – whether in open access or selective systems – and allow for comparison with the statistical distribution of grades in a parallel reference group of another institution. They represent the statistical distribution of positive grades (pass and above) awarded in each field of study in a specific institution’ (European Commission 2015, p. 71).

Grant: public financial support that does not need to be paid back.

Mainstream grants: grants that do not target any specific category(ies) of students and are in principle open to all students, or at least to the majority of them (more than 50%). These grants are either provided as a flat-rate contribution (i.e. not means-tested), or their amount is calculated based on students' income (parental income may be considered when students live with their parents/guardians).

Merit-based grants: grants awarded on the basis of academic performance of students.

Mobility grants: grants that are provided specifically for learning mobility purposes.

Need-based grants: grants awarded on the basis of financial hardship/socio-economic background or special needs of students, which is commonly evaluated based on parental income (students' income may also be considered).

Higher education institution: any institution providing services in the field of higher education, as defined by national law. This includes private and public higher education institutions, irrespective of the composition of funding and management bodies.

Initiative: concrete policy measure, adopted by the top-level authority, to implement a strategy or explore a policy domain.

Inward mobility: refers to the process whereby students move into another country in order to study.

International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED): the ISCED classification has been developed to facilitate comparisons of education statistics and indicators across countries on the basis of uniform and internationally agreed definitions. The coverage of ISCED extends to all organised and sustained learning opportunities for children, young people and adults, including those with special educational needs, irrespective of the institutions or organisations providing them or the form in which they are delivered. The first statistical data collection based on the new classification (ISCED 2011) took place in 2014 (text and definitions adopted from UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012).

ISCED 0: Early childhood education

ISCED level 0 refers to early childhood programmes that have an intentional education component. These programmes aim to develop socio-emotional skills necessary for participation in school and society. They also develop some of the skills needed for academic readiness and prepare children for entry into primary education.

ISCED 1: Primary education

Primary education provides learning and educational activities typically designed to provide students with fundamental skills in reading, writing and mathematics (i.e. literacy and numeracy). It provides basic learning with little specialisation, if any.

ISCED 2: Lower secondary education

In lower secondary education, the educational aim usually is to lay the foundation for lifelong learning and personal development that prepares students for further educational opportunities. Programmes at this level are usually organised around a more subject-oriented curriculum, introducing theoretical concepts across a broad range of subjects.

ISCED 3: Upper secondary education

Programmes at upper secondary education are typically designed to complete secondary education in preparation for tertiary or higher education, or to provide skills relevant to employment, or both. Programmes at this level offer students more subject-based, specialist and in-depth programmes. They are more differentiated, with an increased range of options and streams available.

ISCED 4: Post-secondary non-tertiary education

Post-secondary non-tertiary programmes build on secondary education to provide learning and educational activities to prepare students for entry into the labour market and/or tertiary education. It typically targets students who have completed ISCED level 3 but who want to improve their skills and increase the opportunities available to them. Programmes are often not significantly more advanced

than those at upper secondary level and they are therefore pitched below the higher level of complexity characteristic of tertiary education.

ISCED 5: Short-cycle tertiary education

Short-cycle tertiary education is often designed to provide participants with professional knowledge, skills and competences. Typically, they are practice-based and occupation-specific, preparing students to enter the labour market. However, these programmes may also provide a pathway to other tertiary education programmes. Academic tertiary education programmes below the level of a Bachelor's programme or equivalent are also classified as ISCED level 5.

ISCED 6: Bachelor's or equivalent level

Bachelor's or equivalent level programmes are often designed to provide participants with intermediate academic and/or professional knowledge, skills and competences, leading to a first degree or equivalent qualification. Programmes at this level are typically theory-based but may include practical elements; they are informed by state of the art research and/or best professional practice. ISCED 6 programmes are traditionally offered by universities and equivalent tertiary educational institutions.

ISCED 7: Master's or equivalent level

Master's or equivalent level programmes are often designed to provide participants with advanced academic and/or professional knowledge, skills and competences, leading to a second degree or equivalent qualification. Programmes at this level may have a substantial research component but do not lead to the award of a doctoral qualification. Typically, programmes at this level are theory-based but may include practical components and are informed by state of the art research and/or best professional practice. They are traditionally offered by universities and other tertiary educational institutions.

ISCED 8: Doctoral or equivalent level

Doctoral or equivalent level programmes are designed primarily to lead to an advanced research qualification. Programmes at this ISCED level are devoted to advanced study and original research and are typically offered only by research-oriented tertiary educational institutions such as universities. Doctoral programmes exist in both academic and professional fields.

Joint degree: a single document officially recognised by the appropriate (national or, if applicable, regional) authorities of at least two countries.

Joint programme: usually inter-institutional arrangements among higher education institutions leading to a joint degree. Parts of joint programmes undertaken by students at partner institutions are recognised automatically by the other partner institutions. The same is true for joint degrees (European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2018).

Large-scale initiatives/schemes: initiatives/schemes that operate throughout the whole education system or a significant geographical area rather than being restricted to a particular institution or a geographical location (European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2018).

Learning Agreement: 'a formalised agreement of the three parties involved in mobility – the student, the sending institution and the receiving institution or organisation/enterprise – to facilitate the organisation of credit mobility and its recognition. The agreement is to be signed by the three parties before the start of the mobility period and it is intended to give the student the confirmation that the credits he/she successfully achieves during the mobility period will be recognised' (European Commission 2015, p. 72).

Learning mobility: the physical crossing of national borders between a country of origin and a country of destination and subsequent participation in activities related to tertiary education.

Learning outcomes: 'statements of what the individual knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences. The achievement of learning outcomes has to be assessed through procedures based on clear and transparent criteria. Learning outcomes are attributed to individual educational components and to programmes as a whole. They are also used in European and national qualifications frameworks to describe the level of the individual qualification' (European Commission 2015, p. 72).

Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC): the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region was developed by the Council of Europe and UNESCO and adopted in 1997 in Lisbon. It aims to ensure that holders of a qualification from one European country can have that qualification recognised in another. For more information, visit: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/Recognition/LRC_en.asp.

Loan: repayable financial aid. Student loan models differ greatly between countries such as in their repayment plans, the level of subsidy, the expenses covered, eligibility rules, etc. A student loan is subsidised when the government bears a part of the costs. This subsidy can take the form of a government guarantee which covers the risk of default and loss. Private loans with no public guarantee are not considered in this report.

Monitoring: the process of systematic data gathering, analysis and use of information by top-level authorities to inform policy. Systematic monitoring must include mechanisms of cross-institutional data gathering and allow cross-institutional data comparability.

Multipliers: individuals who have had a learning experience abroad or who have been indirectly involved in one (teachers, families, etc.) and can inspire and motivate other individuals to also undertake such experiences.

Outward mobility: the process whereby students move out of their home country in order to study abroad.

Portability: the possibility to take abroad the support available to students in their home country (within EHEA) for credit or degree mobility.

Portability restrictions: additional requirements implying that grants and loans are portable only under certain conditions such as:

- within certain countries (e.g. portability within the European Economic Area only – not the whole EHEA);
- within a specific time limit;
- for certain study programmes (e.g. only programmes not available in the home system);
- for specific exchange programmes (e.g. portability limited to recognised schemes such as Erasmus+).

Quantitative objectives/targets: numerical targets set by top-level authorities for the proportion of students (or certain categories of students) participating in learning mobility programmes.

Socio-economic background: determined by measuring an individual's or a family's economic and social position relative to others, usually based on income, education, or occupation. Students from low socio-economic backgrounds are often disadvantaged and under-represented in higher education.

Specific mobility support: financial support (grant or loan) provided solely for mobility purposes.

Top-level authority: the highest level of authority with responsibility for education in a given country, usually located at national (state) level. However, for Belgium, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom, the *Communautés*, *Länder*, *Comunidades Autónomas* and the devolved administrations respectively are either wholly responsible or share responsibilities with the state level for all or most areas relating to education. Therefore, these administrations are considered as the top-level authority for the areas where they hold the responsibility, while for those areas for which they share the responsibility with the national (state) level, both are considered to be top-level authorities.

Top-level strategy/action plan: official policy documents on an important policy area usually issued by top-level authorities. They set out the specific objectives to be met and/or the detailed steps or actions to be taken within a given timeframe in order to reach a desired goal.

Transcript of Records: an up-to-date record of the students' progress in their studies: the educational components they have taken, the number of ECTS points they have achieved and the grades they have been awarded. It is a vital document for recording progress and for recognising learning achievements, including for student mobility. Most institutions produce the Transcript of Records from their institutional databases (European Commission 2015, p. 76).

Work placement certificate: 'a document issued by the receiving organisation/enterprise upon the trainee's completion of the work placement; it can be complemented by other documents, such as letters of recommendation. It aims to provide transparency and bring out the value of the experience of the student's work placement' (European Commission 2015, p. 77).

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Mobility Scoreboard: Higher education background report – 2022/2023

Experiencing transnational mobility during education and training is a major boost in the life of many young people. Despite the added value that learner mobility brings and the increasing opportunities available, the path towards the free movement of students, researchers and trainees is still hampered by a number of obstacles. The purpose of the Mobility Scoreboard is to monitor progress made by European countries in promoting, and removing obstacles to, learning mobility.

The Mobility Scoreboard in higher education (available online at <https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/mobility-scoreboard>) was first published in 2016 and includes six composite indicators related to information and guidance, foreign language preparation, portability of grants and loans, participation of disadvantaged learners, recognition of learning outcomes and the automatic recognition of qualifications. This third edition provides updated information for the six featured indicators, mapping changes in the policy environment for international mobility of higher education students.

Information was provided by Eurydice National Units and covers the 27 EU Member States, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Türkiye.

The Eurydice Network's task is to understand and explain how Europe's different education systems are organised and how they work. The network provides descriptions of national education systems, comparative studies devoted to specific topics, indicators and statistics. All Eurydice publications are available free of charge on the Eurydice website or in print upon request. Through its work, Eurydice aims to promote understanding, cooperation, trust and mobility at European and international levels. The network consists of national units located in European countries and is coordinated by the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA).

For more information about Eurydice, see: <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/>

